SHOCK XPRESS

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WIN *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* AND *THE LAMP* ON VIDEO!
FRANK HENENLOTTER INTERVIEWED! RICCARDO FREDA FILMOGRAPHY! BRIAN DE PALMA ON BEING UNTOUCHABLE! SHAUN HUTSON'S TOP TEN HORRORS! TOBE HOOPER ON CHAINSAWS! *FACES OF DEATH* EXPOSED! BRAD F. GRINTER REDISCOVERED! REVIEWS OF: *COMBAT SHOCK*. . . *NIGHT OF THE SORCERORS*. . . *THE OPENING OF MISTY BEETHOVEN*. . . *RIVER'S EDGE*. . . *BLOOD FREAK*. . . AND MANY MORE! HAMMER SEASON TRASHED! VIDEO REVIEWS! RADIO CORRESPONDENCE! VILENESS! VITRIOL! VENOM! TOO MUCH!

Winter 1987 Vol. 2 Issue 2. £1.25

FRANK HENENLOTTER
RICCARDO FREDA
BRIAN DE PALMA
TOBE HOOPER

XPRESSWAY TO YOUR SKULL

El Gran Amor del Conde Dracula

Well, we're almost at the end of another year, and this time we've succeeded in getting three whole issues out. But perhaps we're some way towards solving the problems of our erratic appearances (if questioned closely on that point I will of course deny all knowledge of 'improved' regularity . . .) and we're certainly continuing to add to the 'design' aspect. If all goes well this issue will see us through to the new year, with the next due at an indeterminate conjunction of the planets in January.

Last time I wrote the editorial before the rest of the issue came together, and that, plus Ramsey's piece (probably the best-received feature we've run) provided a kind of ideological springboard (or something) which helped the rest of the issue take shape. This time I've left the editorial until last, mainly due to the fact that as the weeks have rolled past numerous points have raised themselves, but nothing that has thrown me into the paroxisms of fear and loathing like the election and the Obscene Publications Amendment did last time. So what we have here is basically a grab-bag of platitudes and pontifications (what's new . . .?) together with some ideas you might want to respond to.

* * *

On August 1st, we presented the first 'Shock Around the Clock' horror and Xploitation film festival in conjunction with London's *City Limits* magazine. The Scala cinema, well-known warhorse for trash marathons, found itself brimming with dedicated gore fanatics, sleazeballs and curious mutants for a period of over 18 hours. The majority of the *SX* team emerged as well as numerous visiting celebrities – directors Clive Barker and John Hough, special effects man Bob Keen and most of the *Hellraiser* crew, *Hellraiser's* producer Chris Figg, and horror author Shaun Hutson. Ten films were screened, nine of which were previews for the London area, the other being the classic 1958 stinker *She Demons* – shown at 7.00 am Sunday, it finished even the most hardcore schlock fans off better than a mammoth dose of valium . . . The other films to receive screenings were (in order): *A Return to Salem's Lot, Salvation!, American Gothic, Hellraiser, The Stepfather, Street Trash, A Nightmare on Elm Street 3, Witchboard* and *The Lamp*. Audience response was at times fairly overwhelming – *Nightmare 3* sounded like a Superbowl game, and the *three* rounds of riotous applause and bellowing following the uncut *Street Trash* threatened to bring the roof down. *Hellraiser's* reception was a little less raucous, as befits one of the few genuinely inspired, serious horror films in recent years. Barker himself was almost mobbed after taking part in a panel discussion . . . Altogether a wildly successful event (*Witchboard* notwithstanding I'm sorry to say), which left even me satisfied . . .

A couple of days later I finally succeeded in giving myself terminal brain disease with a pilgrimage to observe the Butthole Surfers at the Clarendon. After the thoroughly abysmal rot cranked out by the massively over-hyped AR Kane and deeply repellent toads The Shamen, the Buttholes were like a one-hour breath of stale air, 60 minutes of having some terrible drug shot straight into the central nervous system. Pure bliss. I was deaf for approximately 36 hours after . . .

By the time I'd calmed down from the ecstasy of the Butts, it was the weekend of Conspiracy '87, the World Science Fiction Convention held in Brighton. Probably the biggest gathering of freaks I've ever witnessed (and that *includes* a fleeting visit to Stonehenge festival many years ago . . .), Conspiracy was at times nearer to Hell than I'd care to get. Spent much time wandering around with Carl Ford, including about 40 minutes of an interminable Hawkwind concert; a fine – and hilariously tasteless – panel discussion between Ramsey and Clive Barker, where the latter entertained with some well repulsive dead baby jokes and the former somehow managed to bring up his two (!) vasectomies; many parties, and a trip down the pier to eat donuts made from molten lead.

If that wasn't enough, the following weekend saw myself and Steve Jones organising the British Fantasy Society Convention in Birmingham, a very pleasant and laid back affair, with 200–300 attendees as opposed to the 7000 or so at Conspiracy. While oriented more towards horror/fantasy literature, we still managed to provide video screenings of the uncut *Zombie 3* and Andy Milligan's *Torture Dungeon* . . .

All this 'pleasure' brings me about one-third of the way into September, when I suddenly realise that hardly any of the contributions for the next issue (that's *this* one . . .) of *Shock* have arrived yet. What do we have? No advertising, no competitions, no editorial . . . Ye gods. Strange people keep turning up at the house, demanding to stay for days on end; the baby develops interesting diseases and daily appears more and more like the elderly Alister Crowley . . . But enough of this! What we want is entertainment . . .

And now, a few mumblings about the state of the magazine. I've been musing on whether readers might enjoy to read a few choice excerpts from H.G. Lewis's novelisation of *Moonshine Mountain*, but fearing accusations of space wasting have not done so. What do you think?

Various sections of the magazine are in the process of mutating at the moment. We now have a TV page – Ernie having been more than happy to turn 'Video Obscura' into his observations on the more (and less) interesting aspects of the idiot box. His column retains its title just for the sake of confusion. I'm going to experiment with alternating the fanzine page with books and oddities in print. Had space allowed I'd have liked to devote some attention to the weird and often wonderful publications issued by Robert M. Price and his Cryptic organ (sorry?), as well as concentrating on good new fiction. Maybe even the odd movie book . . . Who knows. I've received a surprising amount of mail on the subject of music ('rock' for want of a better term), and I'm sorry to disappoint the silentish minority but I can't honestly justify taking up space with noise reports, no matter how psychotronic or doom-laden they may be. A few incoherent ramblings in the editorial are all I can envisage at the moment – though I'll interject a brief rant right now and state that anyone thinking of parting with money for a poorly copied bootleg of a naff gore film dubbed into Turkish and letterboxed to the size of a postcard should throw their cash in the direction of Michael Gira and invest in the Swans' *Children of God* double. But for good music coverage you can't do better than *Away From the Pulsebeat* or *Forced Exposure* (*wild* Buttholes interview in the last one) . . .

That's about it for now. Billson finally got around to doing a few reviews (it's only taken her 18 months . . .), *Slimetime* editor Steve Puchalski steps on board this issue with some serious schlock and Phil 'One Troma Too Many' Nutman returns with a short but interesting piece on the travails of Tobe Hooper.

Lastly, a few book plugs. I derived much pleasure from the following: Dennis Etchison – *Red Dreams* (Berkley); Ramsey Campbell – *Dark Feasts* (Robinson) and *Scared Stiff* (Scream/Press); Lucius Shepard – *The Jaguar Hunter* (Arkham House); Karl Edward Wagner – *Why Not You and I?* (TOR); Steve Rasnic Tem – *Excavation* (Avon). Shepard's collection in particular contains some of the finest stories I've read in recent memory, frequently defying generic categorisation and moving into whole new areas of speculative fiction.

The new flesh awaits . . .

Stefan Jaworzyn
Editor

SHOCK XPRESS

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BRAIN DAMAGE (© Frank Henenlotter)

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BACK ISSUES
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XPRESS MAIL

Write to: 26 Stanley Road, Chingford, London, E4 7DB.

So here we are again . . . I must say I'm more than surprised at the volume of mail we received after the last issue and the SX filmfest. One of the things that struck me this time is the abuse factor in the in-tray – at times outweighing that of the replies! Many of my favourite cranks purchase to paper this time around, and I regret there's nowhere near enough space to print all the bizarre stuff that's come in. Remember, please enclose a SAE if you want a reply and try to avoid 'Where can I get hold of . . .' requests if possible.

THE MAN WHO LOST HIS MARBLES (I)

Dear Stefan,

Shock goes pro, eh? Very nice. I must admit I had my reservations about the inclusion of four colour covers, typesettings, advertising and all those general things associated with mass-market publication – but I need not have worried. *Shock* remained full of the ingredients of a first-class 'weirdo' zine with all the old fare perverts on board. I was very impressed with the articles devoted to the obscure movies . . . It's nice to see that you're catering for the horror genre in general and not just printing pieces on hard-core splatter fare . . .

Finally a complaint – what the hell is Stephen Jones doing reviewing horror movies for *Shock*? Judging from the reviews presented by Steve in this issue I would say that the man hates horror movies. To describe the plot of *House II* as 'ridiculous' doesn't really say a lot does it? I mean almost all the films in your zine would appear to be ridiculous on the surface, but *Shock* readers love such movies. But the case rests with Steve's wonderful review of *Toxic Avenger*, where he calls *Class of Nuke'em High* "intolerable" and goes on to describe the film-makers. Who does this guy think he's preaching to? Churchgoers maybe, but surely not *Shock* fans. Next time Steve's in the pub, watch his teeth carefully. I'm sure they bear more than a passing resemblance to those dentures worn by our patron saint Mary Whitehouse. Please confine Steve Jones' ravings to the 'Obituaries' column where this man most certainly belongs.

Yours insanely,
Carl T. Ford.

Yes readers, the estimable Carl T. Ford, editor of **Dagon**, *has gone berserk again . . . What will he think up next? Read on . . .*

THE MAN WHO LOST HIS MARBLES (II)

Dear Stefan,

Having re-read your zine this morning, it has suddenly dawned on me that it may well have been you that reviewed *Toxic Avenger* and those other movies mentioned in my last letter. All I can say, if that is indeed the case, is sorry Mr Steve Jones and f★★k you Stefan. I must admit I was most surprised that this reviewer & editor are one and the same degenerate. My continued support to SX regardless.

Carl T. Ford.
11 Warwick Rd,
TW2 6SW

PS. If you decide to print my first comments on the matter, please include the above so that I only appear to be a 'Little prat' as opposed to a 'f★★king big one'. Cheers.

Editing the letters column now takes me longer than editing the rest of the magazine. Fact. Watching **House II** *and* **Toxic Avenger** *were two of worst cinema experiences I've had all year. Fact. I will not say I like something, nor will I defend it, if I think it sucks the hind legs of dead dogs. Fact. You, Carl, can spend the allowance they give you each week in the mental institution watching as many lousy movies as your evil little heart requires, and that's your privilege. Now, would you rather I introduced an across-the-board policy of recommending all genre movies regardless of quality in case I upset someone, or would you rather I said what I felt to be vaguely 'worthwhile' and what I felt vaguely approximated my 'opinion'? (The latter of course being usually self-obsessed and entirely dependent on the vicissitudes of advertising and untold sums I receive in payoffs from film companies who just love my critiques of their movies . . .) Oh dear, off the deep end again. How tiresome. Sorry, I hated the films and you obviously didn't. It's not exactly disbearers, but it's a start . . .*

THE CURSE OF CTHULHU

Dear Stefan,

I must congratulate you on an excellent looking, colour covered *Shock*. But what is all this crap about Troma? Come on, stop acting the asshole. Even the worst Troma couldn't be as bad as one of old Joe D'Amato's 'walk around in the jungle for years and get your prick bitten off by a cannibalistic lesbian zombie nun on heroin' epics. If there is any more of this kind of talk I'll break your legs.

Dave Carson.
Peabody Buildings,
London SW1.

Troma films represent the . . . Big what's that . . .? It can't be . . . the shambler from SW1 . . . running here . . . Yog-Sothoth save me . . . those tentacles . . . Ia! Shub-Niggurath!

IT'S THAT MAN AGAIN!

Dear SX,

I was surprised to see my letter last issue. I had assumed, judging by the mail in issue 6, that you had to be a weird foreigner or flogging a fanzine (or both) to get a letter published. The new

commercial look works far better than the 'screw'em for every penny' approach in *Starburst* (videos of *Zohan* at £40 each!) Unfortunately some articles are obvious padding for the new format: William Nolan may like *Don't Look Now* but I found it like so many Roeg films – lethargic, incomprehensible and all too sparing in its exploitation elements, and I'd be most grateful to anyone who can explain the plot.

Some sort of TV column is an absolute must. You wouldn't believe how pissed off I get staying up half the night to view a film without even a decent piece of nipple in it, and channel 4 hasn't shown a decent film since the red triangle affair (another thing to blame Mary Shitehouse for). TV itself is looking up, with butch Don Henderson baring all in *Bulman*. Well, okay, it's not my idea of fun either, but hopefully the nubile Siobhan Redmond will follow suit in a future episode.

SX is a superlative zine, one of the few I spend money on, and I wish you luck with the new format, though I would like to know what Anne Billson does.

Simon Colenutt,
Mytholmroyd,
West Yorks.

You're cracking up, son. I'm not sure I should tell a desperado such as yourself what Anne Billson does . . . I've got this odd feeling that Roeg isn't actually an exploitation director, which might explain lack of soft scenes in his movies . . . And which particular piece of nipple were you looking for, by the way . . .? We'll be running a topless Don Henderson cover just for you next issue . . .

BLAIR FAN SPEAKS OUT!

Dear Stefan,

I appreciate your efforts to upgrade the criticism of horror/sleaze films . . . I've enjoyed the last few issues, with the latest edition no exception. Strangely, the interviews seem the least interesting (except for Larry Cohen), as people like Raimi and Cronenberg get a fair amount of attention anyway, something like the Joe D'Amato article, though, is a rare treat and something that no one else can do with any style.

I don't particularly have any suggestions – you seem to do what you want and that's fine by me. A Larry Buchanan retrospective would sure be fun, though, as I have always wondered why and how anyone could/would do scene-for-scene lifts from Roger Corman films. Still, give the man credit for titles like *The Eye Creatures*, *Curse of the Swamp Creature* and *It's Alive!* (predating Cohen's use).

But if I had to put one bug in your ear (I mean really *had* to, y'unnerstan'), that bug would be phrased thus: Linda Blair. Oh, skip all that *Exorcist/Exorcist II* bullshit, I mean Linda Blair of *Chained Heat*, *Born Innocent*, *Hell Night*, *Summer of Fear*. I mean Linda Blair who walks onto the distributor's set of *Savage Island* and starts narrating the turkey. I mean Linda Blair who sashays down Hollywood Boulevard 112 times in *Savage Streets* and has a 'sister' so cute even the most liberal critics couldn't look away in the rape scene. Whose career has slid into the genre's excesses with such panache . . . Whose mastery of broom and crucifix frigging has set so many young hearts aglow . . .

Keep up the good work. I'm sure you will.

Darcy Sullivan,
5209 Calle de Arboles
Torrance
California.

*Pervert! But should I ever feel the need for a Blair area it looks like I've got the man to do it . . . Buchanan's career has been fairly well covered elsewhere (**Subhuman 3** has a great piece on his later work, recommended), but I wouldn't object if someone were interested in doing a full career article . . . I've fallen asleep so many times in the credit sequence alone of* **The Loch Ness Horror** *that I'm beginning to wonder if I'm crazy for persevering . . .*

Near Dark

RAMSEY'S RESTRAINT . . .

Hello Stefan,

Just writing to let you know how much I enjoyed Vol 2, No 1. I love your approach to the letters column, the Brian clough of the film press perhaps? Ramsey's article was very disturbing. I worry for the future when I read about these fanatical 'Gad Squads' and 'clean up the media' merchants. I believe (as you mentioned) it's all related to the Tory government we're having to suffer – the passing of the idea of freedom of choice. What really amazed me was Ramsey's admirable self-control at the meeting.

All good things,

John Carter,
Radford,
Coventry.

Yeah, but would we have ever seen Ramsey again if he had spoken out . . .?

MILLER'S MISSIVE . . .

Dear Shock Xpress,

Hey! what a novel idea! Slag off the people who write into 'Xpress Mail'! Does that also mean that we can slag you off?

Anyway, I'd just like to say that *Evil Dead II* is the most exhilarating, audience participation-inducing movie since *Aliens* (by participation I mean cheering and laughing).

Oh, before I go, I'd just like to say 'F★★k you!'

Yours not too seriously,

Ken Miller,
High Wycombe,
Bucks.

Well, that's blown our chance of getting into Smith's this month . . .

A MOMENT OF PEACE . . .

Stefan,

I've been quietly reading and enjoying *Shock Xpress*, but with your upgrading I wanted to make it official by putting it down in print. Why are you guys so reviled? Here in America there is nothing (fanzine or newstand publication) pushing the limits as *SX* is doing. Yet you're being attacked for your comments on *Fangoria*? Misplaced priorities I say. I'm fearful that we (the United States) are slowly heading towards the disastrous state of affairs you have with videos in your country. Whenever videos start being butchered for every small offense then that's the time I stop renting them. Who wants to read a review of a film that has been drastically altered by a committee of old farts? Not me.

People in your letters page continue to complain about *SX*'s attitude yet they write letters that beg your abuse. You're only giving them what they want. I'm one who buys a magazine because they're doing something I enjoy. Why do people buy *SX* and then write a letter to tell you how their ideas would make it better?

I appreciate your new direction, mixing well known fare (Raimi) with the obscure (the D'Amato piece was the highlight). Campbell's 'The Whitehouse Way' was the most important and enlightening article this time around.

Sincerely,

Craig Ledbetter,
(address in 'Cold Print')

I too am variously mystified by some of the correspondence vomited forth by tortured blockheads, but I measure the invective as much as the praise . . . Last time around I was aghast at the lack of trust evinced by readers concerning the move 'up-market'; that, combined with the idiot mutterings of those offended by my chosen editorial stance prompted the torrents of abuse I hurled out. I do find it odd that people barely capable of holding a pen write in and tell me that what I'm doing is **WRONG** *and that I should change my style to suit their misapprehensions of how* **SX** *should function . . . Some of these guys may well be masochists, and I won't deny that I set myself up for angst-ridden attacks by pronouncing judgement on all and sundry, but I'm quite prepared to justify anything I've said in tedious lengths . . . And will doubtless have to do so when the Troma hit-men come to shove the baby in the oven . . .*

A GRAND DELINQUENT WRITES

Dear Stefan,

I had a shock when I saw the latest: I thought you'd sold out and become a glossy gore rag. I mean, on the cover after "Ranting! Decay!" and before "Dissolution!" you should have added "Glossy Cover! Typeset!" Still, I shouldn't have worried; as soon as I'd opened it the fetid odour of insults like "blockhead", "peabrain", and "Derek Malcolm" assailed my nostrils and I relaxed. Sir, you are a cad, bounder, blackguard, fiend, knave, scullery, garderobe (huh?) . . . but I love you anyway. I think you're very human. Well, *fairly* human. I was reassured by your reply to "Par-boiled in Parbold", at least I think I was (I'm not sure what "a)" referred to but I probably agree anyway). There's too much heed-paying to these FX jox as it is.

Don't drop the 'Review Round-Up': I *love* ratings. It's always interesting to see a 'digital' summation to contrast with a review's 'analogue', even if it does invite misleading comparison between films. Still, that Alan Jones character seems a bit of a wildcard (ace word I picked up from that ace film *Top Gun*; SIG isn't it?). I mean '½' for *TF*? '★★★★' for *FT13PVI*? '★★★★★' for *LSOH*? He sounds a bit dissolute to me: if I were you I'd give him a good talking to.

The necrology section was useful though I was surprised to find Andy Warhol there: I thought he died years ago. No doubt had some of the others still been alive they would have been surprised to find themselves there – if you get my meaning, that is . . .(*Okay, Huysman, that's enough from you . . .*)

Yours,
Nick Haysom
(Address in 'Cold Print')
This looks like praise to me, so I agree with you. Why not? And if you think Ahu is absolute, wait until you see his rare review of **Back to the Beach** *in the next issue . . .*

THE BLOB FANS EMERGETH

Dear SX,
Just to say your multiple person 'Review Round-Up' is a good idea. Especially interesting when one person gives a film one star and the next gives it five – that's my kind of movie.

Another point in favour of publishing different viewpoints (even if it is only in the form of a '★') is that maybe it encourages people to think a little bit for themselves. Often reviews of records, films, books etc, once in print, are seen as the Great Truth/Great Heresy – not just an opinion that happens to get published. A recent reply to a reader's letter in the *NME* (where some of the writers encourage a rigid code of what is 'right' to see and hear) made a similar point . . .
Yours sincerely,
Martin Reddin,
Horsham
West Sussex

Whatever you do, don't read my review of **Toxic Avenger** *in the last issue . . .!*

A FEMALE FEST FAN

Dear Stefan,
First of all, I must thank you from the bottom of my 'hellbound heart' for the truly wonderful 'Shock Around the Clock' festerville! It was a real grefeast of superb selection and taste and worth every penny both for the actual ticket and the travel expenses down there. Please express my thanks to all involved and, since it was such a success, are there likely to be any more of these splatterganzas in the foreseeable future? I hope so!!

As a female horror fanatic (a rare breed it seems round here!) this was also a chance to see the turnout in terms of females vs males and I was pleasantly surprised. It's good to know I'm not alone in my depravity!

I couldn't believe my luck – not only were *Hellraiser* and *Salvation!* on the same bill, but *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3* (which I didn't think I'd ever get to see after the hassles it had in the States). All three I thought excellent, but *Hellraiser* got my vote for the treat of the day. Christ, what a movie! What a love story! What performances and Special FX!

I see you're a Butthole and Swans fan Stefan – have you ever thought of bringing a splattercore angle into *Shock*?

Well, I'll wind up by saying thanx again.
Pip,
100 Stephen Road
Withington
Manchester
M20 0XD
Thank you . . . This is but one of the many letters received on the 'Shock Around the Clock' film fest (amongst them very nice communications from Japanese fan Ryo Arakawa, the irrepressible Shane Kirl, Debbie Woods, Gary Bird, Keith Beavers and numerous others) and is included for a couple of reasons. Firstly, because it came as a surprise to receive a letter from a female, but secondly – and more importantly – because said Pip was recently burgled and lost many video tapes. She's after various documentaries from the TV pertaining to horror, plus oddities such as episodes of 'The Rock'n' Roll Years' and 'The Media Show'. Drop her a line to see if you can help.

BACK TO REALITY

Dear SX,
I'm stupid, damned lazy, tired, tooth-ached, unhappy, unsatisfied and very thirsty female vampyre, coz I haven't got access to CHRISTOPHER LEE!!!! Can you – or anyone in this I★★kin world – help me!???? I'll make you an offer you can't refuse!! I want everything 'bout him: copies or original videos, books, posters, zines, you know! coz he's the greatest, sexiest, loudest, bloodiest etc. As Dracula he's the best, f★★k the rest! Bloody kisses from Scaramanga's Massproduction –
c/o Tumberly Ylavaara,
Sufiankatu 8
95600 Yutornio
Finland
Something told me my life would become meaningless unless I printed this letter. Now I'm worried it might end prematurely unless someone replies to this girlie . . .

Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2

ALAN'S SIN OF OMISSION!

Dear Stefan,
Congrats on the new look *Shock Xpress* – glossier but not flossier.

I usually count myself pretty lucky if I've heard of (let alone seen) a small fraction of the films mentioned in *SX*. But now I've even discovered an omission! Oh joy, oh bliss. I refer to Alan Jones' piece on transsexual exploitation films. He unearths all manner of obscurities and omits to mention *Myra Breckenridge*. Surely the most well-known dock the dick movie of all (and don't say he left it out deliberately as it is well-known or I'll . . . be very disappointed).

Incidentally, did you know that before Mike Sarne decided to use two different people to play Myra (New York film critic Rex Reed before, Raquel Welch after), he did make some test footage with a man, Stanley Glick, playing both roles. Now not many people know that, or are terribly interested when you tell them.

Either way, a pretty dreadful movie. Poor old Mike Sarne; a second rate pop star, then a third rate actor, then a fourth rate director. At least now he seems to found his niche, doing nothing.

All the best to you and yours.
Philip Collins,
Leyton,
London

Strangely enough, when I put your accusation to Ahu he gave me a withering look and communicated something along the lines of "Palme, everyone knows about that old thing . . ." Such is life. But, as you say, a TS movie nonetheless. And whatever did happen to Mike Sarne . . .?

CYNIC XPRESS?

Dear Stefan and Crew,
Well, what a pleasant surprise. I was in Sydney looking for the latest yawnpacked issue of *Fangoria* (yeah, I still feel obliged to buy the sucker, just hoping Bob Martin still comes back!!). There on the stand was the latest *SX* with the nifty colour cover. You guys have really outdone yourselves, the latest issue is terrific.

The only sour point of the whole issue, Stefan, is the fact that you've become so cynical towards your readers – sure, some of the people who wrote in are dickheads but *at least* they bothered to write. *Crimson Celluloid* has been going for over two years and we still average 1 or 2 letters per month . . . I can understand how you've become so cynical . . . I'm cynical because people *don't* write and that was why I set up the 'zine in the first place – to meet fellow horror fans.

That minor gripe aside, I really enjoyed *SX*, I totally agree with your opinion of *Hunger II* – I went with my co-editor Brett the other night and it was a real shitter . . .

Keep up the good work.
David Nolte,
(Address in 'Cold Print')
As a result of the acrimony I seem to have engendered by my mention earlier in the letters department, I have now taken out a subscription to the 'Scourge of the Fingerhour' society and beat myself half to death with rubber monsters three times a day . . . It hasn't helped . . .

RETURN OF THE PEABRAIN BLOCKHEAD!

Okay Jaworzyn the Unpronounceable,
Boy, is it easy to get you mad. I was tempted to praise *Fangoria* to the skies to begin with, just to warm you up, but even a 'peabrain' like me can't bring himself to do that with a straight face . . .

If you 'couldn't care less' that I think two video columns are pointless, why did you ever bother asking for more mail . . .? I thought two video columns seemed daft, I told you. Now you know. You say 'Piss off!' in not so many words. Hey, thanks for your time . . .

As for the rest of your 'reply' . . . I never actually said, or meant to imply, that I thought the majority of the magazine was 'a waste of space'. On the contrary. Give me half a page of decent *SX* as compared to any other crap. What I was trying to say was that your special features are the main reason I, and I suspect many others, buy *SX* . . .

Which brings me to the good bits. The new ish, I was dubious about the colour and horrified at the dramatic price rise, but what the hell. Despite colour, you haven't lost any tack and by golly, have all the good ol' features returned. I'm sorry, I really am. The bleeding review chart has become a centrefold (!) but I can ignore it in the safe company of 'D'Amatos Inferno', 'The Whitehouse Way' and 'Pass the Angora Sweater' (oh, heavenly title . . .). If this amount of digestable garbage continues, I might do something really silly, like stop eating. I won't moan again. Honest.
Yours
Karl Maskell
Felixstowe
Suffolk.
P.S. *Evil Dead II* was crap. Awful, really awful . . . *"Never say sorry, son, it's a sign of weakness." (Marion Michael Morrison, deceased.)*

BRAIN DAMAGED

Henenlotter Holds Forth

By Alan Jones

Brain Damage

Whatever happened to Frank Henenlotter? In 1981 he made his directorial debut with *Basket Case*, a warped horror cartoon packed with outrageously excessive violence posing as comic relief. But since that film, justifiably called "*E.T.* as if written and directed by a psychopath", not a squeak has been heard from the wildly inventive director who won the hearts of gore-hounds everywhere. Henenlotter not only shuns publicity with a vengeance but he is also loath to even discuss his film(s) in the way people with a lot less talent drone on about the subtext contained in their latest 2 day drive-in wonder. The bottom line as far as Henenlotter is concerned is "Did you like the movie?". If you did, then fine, but so what! If you didn't, too bad because basically he couldn't care less. It sounds patronising to say this was all rather refreshing to a cynical old hack like myself, but nevertheless it's the truth as Henenlotter constantly kept me on my toes the whole time I spent with him. And it isn't condecension on my part either to report Henenlotter is nothing more than a straight A sleaze maniac. The fact that he made *Basket Case*, a film some of us hold in high regard, is neither here nor there because quite frankly he couldn't give a shit . . .

So what has Henenlotter been up to these past six years? Apart from holding down a day job, collecting every Jess Franco video he can lay his hands on and writing some rotten scripts, nothing much. Only one of those scripts now forms the basis of his new film *Brain Damage*.

Backed by former Embassy Home Entertainment executives, Andre Blay and Al Eicher, to the tune of $2 million, *Brain Damage* began filming on January 21st this year at a disused warehouse just around the corner from New York's Madison Square Gardens. And the personnel involved with his new project, to be released January in America, should have every sleazophile slavering with anticipation. Edgar Levins, Henenlotter's close friend, produces just as he did for *Basket Case*, *Street Trash* director Jim Muro helps the Steadicam unit, Greg Lamberson, assistant director recently made his own debut with *Slime City* after working on the two independent Gotham based horror films *I Was a Teenage Zombie* and *Plutonium Baby*. The *Brain Damage* soundtrack is in Digital Sound – a first for such a film – thanks to West Coast genius Russell Jessum. And the Special Effects roster consists of Gabe Bartalos, Dave Kindlon, Al Magliochetti, Peter Kuran and Jim McLoughlin who collectively have a mass of credits between them including *Toolbox Murders II*, *The Lamp*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre II*, *Friday the 13th Part VI*, *Day of the Dead*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3*, *The Monster Squad*, *From Beyond*, *Spookies* and *Buckaroo Banzai*.

Brain Damage, originally titled *Elmer the Parasite*, stars all unknown actors bar one: Rick Herbst, Jennifer Lowry, Theo Barnes and Lucille Saint-Peter. The one recognisable name, and only if you saw *Basket Case*, is Kevin VanHentenryck. But his involvement is something Henenlotter is keen to keep under wraps and has to do with an in-joke more than anything else. What *Brain Damage* is about in many ways defies description although what producer Levins says about Henenlotter's sensibilities being at least six months ahead of the rest of the industry could well be true. Henenlotter himself calls it "A horror comedy on the edge. I wanted to blur what was funny and what wasn't. The best review I could ever get regarding this film would be 'The director lost control after the first five minutes'. The sense of danger you will get by not knowing if what you are going to see next is a gag or a bloody special effect is the unease level I want the film to work on. I find it boring setting up a situation to them give an audience exactly what they expect. This just may be me hyping the movie though. You'll never know until you've seen it. And then I'll have your money so too bad!"

Basket Case

Brain Damage concerns Morris and Martha's weird pet – a parasite named Elmer. Bored with being kept under control by the middle-aged couple, the all-singing, all-dancing turd-like creature – his song is Tommy Dorsey's 1940s "Elmer's Tune" – escapes from his bathtub home and enters Brian's apartment where he strikes a bargain with the good-looking youth. In return for a fluid that Elmer will inject him with creating instant euphoria and wild hallucinations, all Brian has to do is promise fresh supplies of a certain food he can't do without – human brains. And so the pattern is set. While Brian roams around junkyards and punk clubs stoned out of his mind on parasite juice, Elmer constantly leaps off his body to burrow through the heads of unwilling donors on a brain-sucking spree. At first Brian sees these unfolding death scenes as psychedelic fantasies divorced from reality, but when his wasted tripped-out binges end he is shocked and horrified at Elmer's idea of a night on the town. Unfortunately he's now addicted to Elmer's mind-expanding liquid. And Elmer knows that the withdrawal symptoms will force Brian to get him more brains no matter what the cost. But as Martha and Morris demand the return of their pet, Elmer damages Brian's brain with one large final dose of fluid changing its physical shape heralding the ultimate psych-out of acid light-shows, blood and brains.

"I haven't the faintest idea where I found the inspiration for *Brain Damage*", said Henenlotter, "It sounded like a good story with potential. I started with the image of a monster leaping off someone's body and took it from there. Why would anyone want a monster on his body? There could only be two reasons – you either don't want it there or you have control of it. It was more interesting to write a story about why you would want it there. Nothing deeper than that. Sorry to disappoint you".

"*Elmer the Parasite* was always a gag title", he continued. "I need one to start writing otherwise I never would. At one stage this was called *The Tingler Takes a Trip* and that about says it all. Way back when I always wanted to remake *The Tingler* and resented the fact there was no market for a new type of LSD film. So I combined two of my favourite genres and this is the result. A phony title gets me going and puts me in the mood. Generic titles like *Basket Case* and *Brain Damage* can easily be swiped too, so why take the risk of fanzine gossip. Far better to throw the competition off the scent. I have a whole bunch of titles I want to use but I'm not telling anyone what they are especially someone like you who would tell everyone."

"After *Basket Case* I turned down a lot of shitty stuff at no great loss", he explained. "I could have made *Son of Basket Case* or *Bride of Basket Case* but even I didn't want to see those. Some producers would say to me 'Take this script and make it with your sense of humour *but don't change anything*'. Obviously I wasn't interested and the same went for a couple of made-for-video films. The latter I would have done if I could have gone way over the top and made semi-pornographic non-narrative blood and guts garbage. But I was told there was no market. *Brain Damage* was the first good script I wrote in those years and that was two years ago now. A good script writes itself quickly, it's the lousy one's you slave over. That's how I knew this would get made. I'm not prolific at all but *Brain Damage* simply fell into place".

"You say people are intrigued by what I'm going to come up with next", he said. "But I don't think anyone really cares about what I'm prepared to give them after *Basket Case*. Does anyone really give a fuck apart from a few aesthetes – and that means you and perhaps four other people! But if you insist, I thought I would tone down the humour this time. I went out of my way but I just couldn't do it. On the first day of shooting all the planned restraint went straight out the window. Nor did I at first gear *Brain Damage* around the special effects. I had met Dave Kindlon a few years ago and was so amazed he wanted to work with me. My personal brief was I only wanted a creature that couldn't possibly be a hand puppet and I lucked out with Dave's work which can only be described as 'Gumby Goes to Hell'. He worked in such close conjunction with Gabe that the first time we shot a scene of Elmer biting into a victim's forehead, I laughed like crazy because it was so good with his tail flapping like crazy. The actress was unnerved enough as it was but I kept shooting endless footage because I want to keep it forever. I intend putting my favourite music behind it so I can have the ultimate video clip. When I first told everyone about this idiot script a while back I was amazed they stupidly all dropped other higher paid jobs to work on it. So they have a piece of it and if it makes any money at all then so do they".

According to Henenlotter, the higher budget is deceptive. He said, "All it's doing is letting us film in 35mm with better quality cameras and high speed lenses. It won't look slick although the backers are hoping it will be. They have been telling me over and over again, 'We must be sure it doesn't look like the last one'. I didn't like the look of *Basket Case* either but I know they don't believe me. I had nothing to play with there just one 16mm camera and a zoom lens. *Basket Case* completely surprised me if you want to know the truth. It made more money than it ever had a right to deserve. I made it to dump on 42nd. Street for a couple of days. I never thought anyone would take any notice of it, nor did I make it to be noticed. I thought it was good because I left a lot of stuff in the film that amused me as I primarily made it for myself not a bunch of film critics. If I had been more self-conscious I would have toned it down".

"Sleazy movies are my world", he continued. "Give me $23 million and I'll give you 23 low budget sex and horror films. Just call me an American Jess Franco! I would love to play more dangerously – give me an X rating and a mix of horror, porn and comedy because ultimately these are the films I want to make. I love those sort of movies because in honesty they excite me. I love being caught off guard. That's why I like quote bad movies unquote because whether it was intended or not is of no concern. The only concern is the film itself and if a film can take you by surprise and take you somewhere you've never been taken before then great. I'm willing to follow. I don't care if its accidental. Just let's all have a good time. Whether its either *Re-Animator* or Mamie Van Doren we are getting the same ride. My favourite gag would be a man getting a pie in the face, his head splitting open with brains spurting everywhere and a naked woman jimping onto the gore, humping the brains, to see that sort of sequence would make me very happy.

"Nobody thinks I'm this wonderful director – you're one of three people whose ever said that – but thanks for the compliment" said Henenlotter when I tried to call his bluff and make him admit that his self-effacing stance didn't fool me one bit. But it seems I was wrong. "Comments like that really do embarrass me. Perhaps my art isn't accidental but it's nothing to build a cult around. I don't want that. We're talking because I want to promote the film and interviews are unfortunately a necessary part of the whole boring business. Of course I want people to know about the film, when to expect it and what the story is to whet the appetite. But that's all. I ban any photos of me posing around the set because I don't want people knowing who I am. I don't like it. For the book *Incredibly Strange Films*, I was told I was going to be an introductory paragraph on one page. I was frankly humiliated at the ten page spread. Not because of the company I was in but the fact is I've only made one film and I didn't deserve the coverage. I really didn't. I was so upset".

"I don't know what an (American) R rating is", commented Henenlotter on the need to secure one for broader acceptance in the market place. "There are no standards, no guidelines. How the MPAA rate a film seems to depend on how they feel in the morning. I have no idea if anything gory we are shooting will be in the final film. It seems an underlying sense of humour is not taken into account. Stallone gets an R with all the knives, guns etc. in *Rambo*, but *Brain Damage* is a fantasy. Screen violence does not cause anyone to copy it. That is one of the dumbest arguments I've ever heard. But if you were to accept it, I would worry more about rape scenes, shootings and muggings than a George Romero zombie biting off someone's arm. No one is going to do that when they leave the cinema. Gore is so often confused with violence and it isn't the same at all. Gore is a gross-out which is often funny but it isn't violent or real life – well, not as I know it. *Brain Damage* features an extensive brain unravelling which even I'll admit is disgusting. But should anyone be protected from it? I have no idea what to do about it so I'm shooting everything anyway and using blue blood as opposed to red in some cases to lessen the criticism. I was considering filming a 15-minute blood puking scene with someone sticking razor blades in his head just so the ratings board would cut it out and leave the less obvious alone!".

All *Brain Damage* has to do as far as Frank Henenlotter is concerned is turn to profit. He said, "What's a big success in real terms? I know I'll enjoy it. I don't want to go back and do a day job again but then I don't want to do another movie yet either. I'm taking each day as it comes. I'll worry later back in the real world. There are a couple of weird hallucination optical shots at the climax of *Brain Damage*. It is the one place in the entire film where I've set out to shock and disturb. As yet I don't know if it will indeed upset people or just crack them up instead. You will love it because you're obviously just as disturbed as I am. But for each one of you, you know, there will be 400 people who won't and tell others to stay away. Who cares? There are plenty of films out there and if anyone doesn't like the sound of *Brain Damage*, please don't go and see my film if all you're going to do is whine about it. Everybody's a fucking critic these days – no offence. Whatever sins I made on *Basket Case*, I'm probably repeating here and will do so on the next one. Please keep this interview short in print. I don't want to bore people to death!".

Brain Damage

Brain Damage

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL 1, 2, 3

The FACES OF DEATH Series

By David Kerekes

Mondo = world *cinema*. A documentary of sorts.

Because of man's natural preoccupation with bizarre sex and bizarre death, the mondo film exists — an educational film offering no facts. *Faces of Death* is such an education, its subject matter being rather more conservative than most in that it breaks down the aesthetic group of sex and violence even further . . .

Plagued by the recurring dream of a funeral, Dr Francis B. Gross (narrator and pathologist extraordinaire, i.e. how can he see out of those glasses?) is driven by "a compulsion to understand" — to make a journey that takes him around the world; a dream that determines the beginning of a three film mission to search out new deaths; to accumulate footage of autopsies, of slaughterhouses, of assassinations and accidents.

"Prepare yourself for a journey," Gross tells us at *Faces of Death's* opening, "a journey into a world where each new step may give you a better understanding of your own reality." An understanding born of slaughterhouses, perhaps? A journey to a roadside accident, maybe? Be prepared alright — *Faces of Death* does touch nerves. Its full-frontal approach is in parts genuinely shocking and repulsive. (Full-frontal *violence*, of course — at any sign of genitalia a kind of ink stain plops over the offending bits — an upside down logic at work if ever there was.) For the most repulsive see: the culinary delight of monkey-bashing and brain chomping in a restaurant; the Kosher abattoir method of cattle purification; fur seal hunting; post mortem procedures.

Permeated with Gross' hypothesis, his 'insight' and theology, this may come across as something slightly more than what it is, but it is a mondo movie — a shockumentary — and as such cannot be taken for anything other than 'face' value: perverse, nihilistic entertainment. For unlike its two imaginatively titled sequels *Faces of Death* stands comfortably alongside the best of the rest in the genre, having the right blend of 'real' and 'manufactured' footage, and it even gets boring two-thirds of the way through . . .!

It may be of interest to note that the UK print of *Faces of Death* is missing a number of sequences, notably an execution by electric chair; film of a bizarre San Francisco cannibal cult; (various) footage of burning figures — religious fanatics and others — to list but a few. As the 'missing' sequences are more potent than those left in, it seems likely that the UK distributors themselves decided to bring *Faces of Death's* running time down from the original American release of 105 minutes to a more reasonable/acceptable 70 minutes.

An if you thought that *Faces of Death* warranted a follow-up — and it didn't — then you shouldn't be surprised to hear that it spawned not one, but two sequels. Further trails of bodies for bucks (the sequels never made it to British shores). The very idea of a follow-up mocks the false sense of sincerity which the original film tried to convey; *Faces of Death II* and *Faces of Death III* are merely excuses to warm over the morbid excesses of their predecessor, and although the same ground is covered, parts II and III stand as two very different movies. *Faces of Death II* is the poorer.

Where *Faces of Death* had the redeeming quality of understanding its own limitations; the lucidity of exhibiting 'the end' as an entertainment and at the same time presenting it so wholeheartedly, *Faces of Death II* comes across as a cheap con; it's tiring and it's smug. The first film hooked an audience, part II milks it, treating us to further air disasters and train derailments, but this time around it's on long newsreel — while a 'likeness to an orginal' can often constitute *low-art*, it is by far a better commodity than attempting to pass *no-art* off as something which it is not. Take for instance *Faces of Death II's* inclusion of familiar archive film of the Vietnam war and napalm-scarred victims, all the more shocking because of the context in which it is being utilised; no longer is this a journey through the valley of death but a long ogling look at it — what matters this time is the graphic footage available. No reconstructions. No "what-you-are-about-to-see-is-all-real"-type nonsense. Thus *Faces of Death II* breaks the unwritten law of the mondo: Thou Shalt Not Appear Stupid.

As it nonetheless proved fruitful (do people go to the cinema with their girlfriend and/or boyfriend to see mondo films? Do they gape even at the horror hits?), it wasn't long before the series was blessed with another. This time though, it's a "F.O.D. Productions Presents" . . . And with *Faces of Death III* comes again the good Doctor: "I would like to invite you on yet another journey . . ." Doesn't sound too promising does it? Another detour and further air disasters and auto accidents gets the third *Death* under way; "For as long as people drive people will also die" — Gross, back with a vengeance. Doesn't sound at *all* promising, right? Right. But after this inpired opening, *Faces of Death III* suddenly changes gear. Just when it looked as though we were going to get another helping of part II, III drops the newsreel footage . . . to the extent that it is almost a parody of the previous film: *Faces of Death II* consists almost *entirely* of 'reconstructions', regardless of the post-credit legend "Certain scenes have been recreated to depict . . .". Police chase a homicidal maniac — fake! See an underwater photography team attacked by sharks — fake! Rattlers attack a plumber. A man jumps. A *Turgey* gunman gets done. Fake, Fake, Glorious Fake! Witness river police give chase to a gang of drug smugglers (lengthy chase, you understand, this *is* part III) — a face of death? No, but one of the smugglers is shot dead en route. Get the picture? Parts I and II already exhausted the panoramic approach to the event, so III takes the logical next logical step of personalising the event. III is a series of isolated incidents: true-life drama stories, with Gross as Crypt-Keeper (he never was a real pathologist anyway but a certain Michael Carr). And at this rate the series could run forever . . . (Faces of *Near* Death?)

Typical of the mondo genre in general, the *Faces of Death* series has proved itself to be a rather fickle commodity. That it has diversified in such a short span of films from *World* Of Death through to *United States of America* Death is more attributable to careless padding than to month planning. If ever there was a "compulsion to understand" it has long since been overshadowed by the desire for further product. Where *Faces of Death* was a genuine attempt at a rollicking adventure, part III is little more than a recompense for the worthless part II. A final retribution? Mondo trash.

CREDITS

FACES OF DEATH (1981)
director: Conan Le Cilaire
producer: Rosilyn T. Scott
writer: Alan Black
creative consultant and narrator: Dr Frances B. Gross

FACES OF DEATH II (1984)
director: Conan Le Cilaire
producer: Rosilyn T. Scott
writer: Alan Black
creative consultant and narrator: Dr Frances B. Gross

FACES OF DEATH III (1986)
director: Conan Le Cilaire
producer: Rosilyn T. Scott
writer: Alan Black and Veronica Lakewood
creative consultant and narrator: Dr Frances B. Gross

COLD PRINT

By Stefan Jaworzyn

AWAY FROM THE PULSEBEAT
Issue: Experienced? Further excellence from Art Black and Moniea Dee. *AFTP* appears even more sporadically than *SX* (this one is several months old, with a new one promised 'soon' . . .), but is more than worth the wait. A brutal 98 pages long, it comprises a fairly definitive guide to what's worth listening to in the world of wild music. If anything Art is *too* kind to some of the garbage he inflicts on himself, but with the wonderful *Forced Exposure*, *AFTP* is the last word in new sounds. Where else could you find a interview/feature on Killdozer . . . Plus coverage of the better comics, sleaze publications and a million reviews. But silly old Art hasn't put a price on the cover . . . Write to: P.O. Box M1842, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA.

CRIMSON CELLULOID
The guys responsible wrote and said the issue I'd previously enjoyed wasn't a particularly good one – so much for my judgement . . . After seeing No. 17 I can still give a high recommendation. Packed full of reviews (they loved *Combat Shock* too . . .), strange bits of trash clipped out of newspapers, interviews with people you'd never imagine and sundry craziness. *CC* has shaped up impressively as the Australian equivalent of a good US sleazezine. They promise to head up-market soon, with help from Phil Edwards. Info from: 312 Great Nth Rd, Five Dock 2046, New South Wales, Australia.

DAGON
Originally conceived largely for players of the 'Call of Cthulhu' game, Carl Ford's *Dagon* has expanded most admirably over the last few issues, the current (18/19, a double issue devoted to the work of T.E.D. Klein) being a superb presentation. 78 pages long, it features an excellent selection of essays, articles, interviews and artwork focussing on Klein's career, plus a short, deleted chapter from *The Ceremonies* and a revised version of 'Hagendorn's House', an obscure tale from *Country Inns*. Contributors include Klein, Ramsey Campbell, Gahan Wilson, S.T. Joshi, Robert M. Price plus some inspired work from Dave Carson. Costs £1.75, or £6.00 UK/$20.00 USA (cash only) for a year's subscription. Dagon Press also have a 450-copy limited, signed edition of Dave Carson's *Haunters of the Dark* portfolio, containing six of Carson's most impressive illustration of Lovecraftian and Lovecraft-inspired horrors. A fine package, including an amusing foreword by Ramsey. £4.50 inc p&p. Both available from: 11 Warwick Road, Twickenham, Middx, TW2 6SW, England.

DARK WOLF
More comics . . . This one comes from Malibu Graphics of California, and is more or less comprehensible. Story concerns the eponymous character's quest for vengeance after some centuries spent in limbo. It turns out he and his lover were burned to death by slimeballs and he hasn't quite gotten over it . . . Issue 1 had a cameo appearance by the lovely Kelly Nichols (ex-porno star; nail-gun victim in *The Toolbox Murders*), issue 2 by the slightly less lovely Harlan Ellison . . . In b&w. Malibu also do something called *Stealth Force*, the tag-line for the first being 'Meet the members of Stealth Force . . . And watch them die!' $1.95 per issue, though you can probably pick them up in UK comics shops easily enough, from: P.O. Box 3185, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359, USA.

GRANDELINQUENCE
Easily the most interesting publication to emerge from the UK in recent times. Small format, 64 pages packed full of reviews, comment and articles – all well above average. The investigation of obscure TV genre fodder is peerless, and there's a fine sense of insanity running riot throughout. Worth the price of admission for the merciless lampoons of *Starlog* alone . . . There's nothing wildly perverse or gory covered, but editor/publisher Nick Haysom is aiming for a different market and succeeds perfectly. Recommended. £1.15 inc p&p from: 45 Springvale Road, Kings Worthy, Winchester, Hants, SO23 7ND.

HI-TECH TERROR
Impressively warped but slim publication from Craig Ledbetter, dealing with (on the whole) objectionable sleaze videos available in the US. Continental and Oriental rubbish seem to be Craig's stomping ground, and one can't fault him for that. Only 4 pages but thoroughly enjoyable. $6.00 for 12 issues from: Box 5367, Kingwood, TX 77325, USA.

HOLLYWOOD BOOK AND POSTER NEWS
I actually met proprietor Eric Caidin at Conspiracy in Brighton, and the first thing he did was pull out a sheaf of photos of porno stars and wrestling jocks, not mention The Mighty Sphincter, which he assures me are "rock's answer to Charles Manson" . . . Eric had material like the script (there is one?) for *Plan 9* and H.G. Lewis posters for sale . . . Ask for lists. Latest *HBAPN* continues to improve, featuring interviews with H.G. Lewis, David Friedman and Bruce Campbell, photos of muscle-bound blockheads and another weird cartoon strip by The Alcalde. A couple of dollars for postage to: 1706 N. Las Palmas, Hollywood, CA 90028, USA.

MAGICK THEATRE
It's almost an insult to call this beautifully produced magazine a 'fanzine'. The standards of writing/information supply/layout are the best I've seen in an 'amateur' magazine. Issue 8 features material to make any self-respecting fan of sleaze/oddities drool heavily: Bruno VeSota interview, Susan Cabot tribute, the making of *Dementia*, the films of AIP, Forry interviewed and a cover pic of John Carradine in *The Cosmic Man* . . . Not to mention reviews (movies, books, fanzines) and a Drew Friedman strip. Publisher/editor/designer Raymond F. Young should get a saint-hood for this. Essential. $5.95 in USA or $9.95 abroad (includes p&p) from: PO Box 0446, Baldwin, NY 11510-0129, USA.

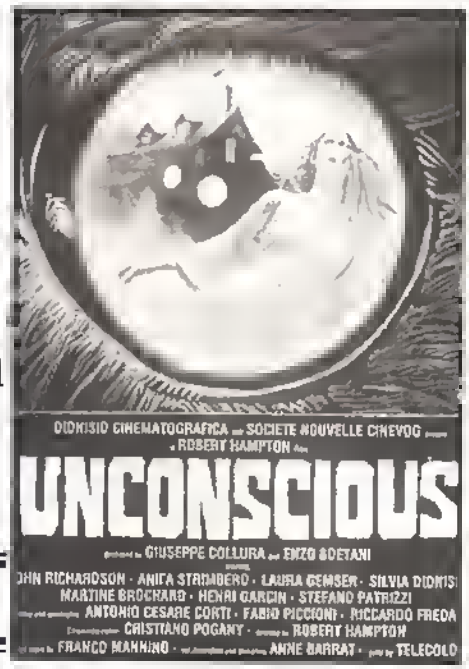
PRETTY POISON
An occasional publication by Gary Gittings, *PP* has come and gone as Gary's whims have taken him – he's been known to suspend it when he received too much fan mail! Recently resurrected, it now runs to two pages of reviews and ranting, usually accompanied by a murky cover. Generally possessed of good taste in sleaze, mutilation and mainstream movies, Gary's style is amusing and informative, very much modelled on Rick Sullivan's *Gore Gazette*, while his failings are a marked disinterest in spelling and reliance on a typewriter which gives the impression of being a relic of a dim and distant epoch . . . Worth a look. No price, write for subscription details: 307 Bloxwich road, Leamore, Walsall, W. Mids, WS2 7BD.

SLIMETIME
New York's best trashzine continues unabated, issue 11 being the last received. Included therein are reviews of such classics as *Satan's Sadists*, *King Kong Lives*, Steckler's *The Thrill Killers* and *Rat Fink and Boo Boo*, *The Flesh Eaters* and some total obscurities. Editor Steve Puchalski's taste is always spot on and there's little to fault in the whole endeavor. Recommended. Subscriptions: $3.00 for 6 issues (50 each back issues.) UK add a couple of dollars for postage. From: 1108 East Genesee St. 103, Syracuse, NY 13210, USA.

WITCHMASTER

Forty Years In Another Town

By Ed Senior



"Amidst Freda's crazy world of giants, spectres, vampires and assorted mythical beasties, one might by turns become both bored and excited but one is never allowed to forget that a highly sophisticated visual artist is at work." (David Badder, *Film Dope* # 17).

. "Cinema is action, emotion, tension, speed. I was often accused of shooting too fast. For example, I would do a scene and the reverse shot at the same time, changing the angle, but not the lighting — and saving an hour and a half of technical set-ups. I used three or four cameras . . . etcetera. But there's a reason, which isn't just to save costs. It's because the faster you shoot, the faster your inspiration flows with the story. Cinema is action also for the director." (Freda, from an interview in *Divoratori di Celluloide*, edited by G. Fofi and P. Pistagnesi, Edizioni Del Mystfest, 1981 (e))

"The visual motif that carries the narrative . . . is enhanced by Freda's inspired orchestration of light . . ." (Aurum Film Encyclopedia of Horror, Ed.: Phil Hardy 1985 (e) From review of *L'Orribile Segreto del Dr Hichcock* (1962)

"This picture is spoiled by bad cutting, worse special effects and a ludicrous setting . . . this cheaple appears to have been made with so little thought that it borders on dishonesty . . ." (ib.) From review of *Maciste All'Inferno* (1962)

Riccardo Freda, Italian film director, journeyman or genius or, more likely, something in between, stands about five feet five; he has the air of a retired imp, a young and beautiful daughter, and a big black dog called Witch. His conversation is opinionated and fascinating, his good humour disarming the more poisonous barbs aimed at American directors, neo-realism, and intellectual critics. He loves movies.

He was born in Alexandria, Egypt, February 24, 1909. In 1918, the family moved to Milan. His early education was at Alexandria's Italian School and the city's many movie houses. His mother was an inveterate cinemagoer, frequently dragging her unprotesting son from one theatre to another several times a day.

Freda disliked the static dramas, but relished the bravura adventures of Fairbanks and Valentino; to this day he can remember and describe entire sequences from his favourite films, which he saw over and over again.

He recalls being at first frightened and then delighted by the gesticulating, vociferous reactions to the action on screen of the poorer Arabs in the cheapest cinema seats. There was a rigid segregation of audience; the local wealthy and aristocratic personages occupied the best positions, then there were the Europeans, then the rest.

Later, in Milan, the young impressionable Freda succumbed to the eerie delights of Murnau and Dreyer. *Nosferatu*, *Golem*, *Faust*, left haunting echoes of a fantastic alter-world, which would sound again through the flamboyance of even his most pedestrian movies.

When asked by a French journalist whether he early wished to become a film director, Freda responded by claiming that he would have liked to follow the example of a Murnau, or a Lubitsch, being in complete control of his films, but realised while still young that the director of the sort of genre which he enjoyed most, the Fairbanks films for example, was very much a servant of the iconography of star and subject, with little scope for personal control or use of imagination. Therefore he had no great desire to follow such a career. In his twenties, newly married, Lubitsch and Lang were his cinematic gods, his studies were Latin, Greek, Design, and after a brief spell at university he decided to pursue a career as a sculptor.

He entered the studio of a Milanese called Prendoni, a now-forgotten practitioner of the short-lived Lombardy School of sculpture. Freda's activities were unremarkable, except in that he made lasting and ultimately influential friends among the country's artistic community.

His training and ability was later put to use in the films *Spartaco*, *I Giganti Della Tessaglia*, and *Maciste Alla Corte Del Gran Khan*, for each of which he personally did some of the statuary.

At age 24, a friend who was working on the statues and ornamentation of the recently-founded Centro Cinematografica Italiano in Rome, sent for Freda to be his collaborator. This institution later developed into the Centro Sperimentale and became an arm of the Fascist government, producing and financing many notorious films of the thirties. Today, it is linked with the Cineteeca Nazionale, the prime film archive in Italy.

Freda dissociates himself completely from all his biogs which state that he worked at the Centro Sperimentale, having been asked to become a film-maker there.

The slap-hazardy approach to film-making had characterised early Hollywood still pertained to the Italy of the thirties: Freda was soon involved in all aspects of production at the Centro; tinkering and collaborating on scripts, set decoration, editing, etc. Between 1937 and '43, he co-wrote 14 movies, the first of which was *Lasciate Ogni Speranza (Abandon All Hope)*, with Edoardo Anton, a close friend.

His first taste of direction came in 1938, with *Piccoli Naufraghi*, on which he assisted the undistinguished Flavio Calzavara. Freda also cut the film, which is only now worthy of note because the music was composed by Renzo Rossellini, although it should be mentioned that Freda, under the pseudonym Riccardo Santelmi, played the leading role.

During this period, up to the collapse of Fascism and the temporary destruction of the Italian film industry in 1943, Freda worked with many people who subsequently would become key figures in the boom years of the fifties and sixties . . .

I Giganti Della Tessaglia

Raffaello Matarazzo, later responsible for a hugely successful series of films (*Tormento, Catene* etc.) starring Italy's fifties answer to Burton and Taylor, Amadeo Nazzari and Yvonne Sansom, and for the sublimely sadistic excesses of *La Nave Delle Donne Maladene (Ship Of Condemned Women*, 1954), was the co-scenarist and director of *Nomi Di Fortune and L'Avventuriera Del Piano Di Sopra*, both 1941. Luigi Zampa, director of the award-winning post-war *Vivere In Pace (To Live In Peace*, 1946), co-wrote with Freda and, amongst others, Ennio Flaiano — most famous for his long collaboration with Fellini — *L'Abito Nero Da Sposa* (1943). Mario Monicelli (*I Soliti Ignoti, L'Armata Brancaleone*, many others) worked on *La Granduchessa Si Diverta* (1940), before starting his fruitful apprenticeship with Steno and Toto. The director of this film was the prolific Giacomo Gentilomo, who made many of the peplum movies of the sixties, and in particular *Macisse Contro Il Vampiro* (1961).
Edoardo de Filippo, Vittorio De Sica, Cesare Zavanini, names normally associated with the upper strata of Italian filmmaking, all were active around the Centro Sperimentale whilst Freda learned and contributed.

In 1943, Mussolini was overthrown and there was chaos in Italy. Freda and some friends fled to Naples. He was briefly involved with American Intelligence, and returned to Rome with the allied troops. He found his apartment in the Piazza Trinita dei Monti overflowing with Yugoslavian partisans, the chief of whom was also enjoying the hospitality of his wife. Freda went back to work.

Through 'til '45, he worked on what he described as the first Italian musical: *Tima La Città Canta*, a cheaply made series of numbers interspersed with minimal plot. Interestingly, an uncredited Federico Fellini contributed to the script; not very much, but something, for one week!

With the exception of the classic *I Miserabili*, released in two parts in 1947, a reasonably faithful, slightly stodgy version of Hugo's *Les Miserables*, which featured the screen debut of Marcello Mastroianni, Freda's career from 1946 on, starting with Aquila Nera (Black Eagle), was a headlong gallop through genre cinema. Historical adventure, spy thrillers, murder mysteries, horror, peplum: his films encompassed the lavish tragedy of *Beatrice Cenci* (Freda's version was lush and violent, but achieved a dignity utterly absent from Fulci's later crass and ugly remake) and the first Italian vampire film, *I Vampiri* — a 1956 failure, heavily but unsuccessfully influenced by the Hammer gothics.

One area of Italian cinema which Freda adamantly refused to get involved with, and about which he remains unrepentantly scathing, was neo-realism.
"*Aquila Nera* exploded like a bomb to scatter the foetid miasma of neorealism . . . My film was at last the first 'American' type of its kind (in Italy), with the triumphant parade of the cossacks at the end trampling down the last resistance of a Cinema perpetually anchored in sordid human misery."

Freda doesn't disguise his feelings, nor politely mask with latin ornateness, his opinions about other directors, actors, critics. Like Vittorio Cottafavi, Sergio Corbucci, he is secure in the knowledge of his own competence, unashamed of the nature of much of his work, and very very pleased at the surging interest in the mainstream Italian cinema of the past, to the glories of which he and his co-artisans contributed so much.

On Alessandro Blasetti, who directed one of the most successful 'soft' neo-realist films, *Quattro Passi Tra Le Nuvole/Four Steps In The Clouds*, 1942, *in advance* of neo-realism proper! — and *Fabiola*, 1949, with its juicy depictions of torture and crucifixions embellishing a routine Christian/Romans plot . . .
"Blasetti always had none-too-clear ideas; he knew where to put the camera, for the point of view of the spectators, but always made a mess of the exposition of the story, which is essential in cinema. In *Salvator Rosa* (he) is incapable of telling the story clearly, even though it was his best film . . . *(Salvator Rosa)* is a confusing film, and at one point no one could understand who was the bandit and who was (the hero) . . . *Fabiola* is not a totally comprehensive film . . ."

On Cinema as 'art', according to critics:
"For me cinema is American cinema, there is no other cinema . . . between Raoul Walsh and Ingmar Bergman, there is no common ground: one speaks cinema, the other is a most intelligent man, perhaps frighteningly intelligent, but he doesn't make cinema."

On actors and directors:
"Our (Italian) actors are the laziest of all."
"I must say I was very satisfied with Edmund Purdom, a very disciplined actor."

"The French always gave me great satisfaction, above all Micheline Presle in *Beatrice Cenci*."
"One of the actresses with whom I worked with great pleasure was Yoko Tani; we never had more than one or two retakes, and I have rarely seen such discipline and professionalism in an actress."
". . . but it's a fact that in a scene with several people, if there is one of them who doesn't give you what you want (as a director), it's not very grave."
"I've always adored beauty, and in my life I am always surrounded by beautiful women. Even my secretary must be beautiful . . . I have never worked (in my films) with unattractive women, like (Mariangela) Melato or Streisand, irrespective of their talent."
"(Amadeo) Nazzari asked me, as executive producer (of *Caravaggio*), why Caravaggio never kissed a woman, saying: 'And with my face and figure!'"
"To make his films, Fellini shoots for months and months, eating up miles and miles of negative. Experimenting over and over, shooting and re-shooting, after having viewed the material in the projection room, he then hands over this avalanche of celluloid to an experienced editor, who salvages some sequences; but at what a price of boredom and presumption!"

Freda has little time for many American directors, several of whom, during the 'Hollywood-on-the-Tiber' period of the sixties would arrive in Rome to make major studio backed 'epics', following the worldwide success of Pietro Francisci's *Hercules* movies. According to Freda, although he was only nominally responsible for the exteriors of *I Mongoli (The Mongols*, 1960), with full directorial credit going to Andre de Toth, he virtually did the whole film; similarly he quotes his friend Mario Bava's experience on *La Battaglia Di Maratone (Giant Of Marathon*, 1949): Bava was second unit director, and photographer, the MGM financed production being credited to Jacques Tourneur. Apparently Tourneur disappeared back to America after a couple of weeks and "phoned in his direction" thereafter, Bava finishing the film.

When Freda was making *I Mongoli*, he had trouble with Jack Palance, who, much to the Italian speed-merchant's chagrin, insisted on 'preparing himself' prior to each scene, however simple, with deep breathing exercises, psyching up etc. Eventually Freda left Palance off the call sheet, having discovered a dead ringer for the American star (!?) among the German extras, and went off with the cast and crew to finish the film without actually using the star. Freda gleefully admits to even having a close-up of this stand-in and no one noticing the difference.

Despite the cheapness of many of his historical films, Freda is very serious about their intentions. He does not regard escapism as any less worthy of critical attention in movies than other more identifiably 'serious' concerns. He is very articulate on what he sees as a major problem in these films: that of appropriate and convincing dialogue. "It is most difficult to make a film in costume which is not a modern film — most difficult and most interesting."
It is a problem allied to the difficulty of using images which are essentially modern, in the shape of actors, and few directors overcome it. ("Even Antonioni, who a few years ago collaborated on *Nel Segno Di Roma*.")
When he wanted to make *Dr. Hichcock*, he took great care to find the right actors, English being essential, he felt, for this Victorian melodrama reeking of repression and suppressed sexual violence. He chose Robert Flemyng after seeing the actor in an English television play. Barbara Steele was (in retrospect) an obvious and ideal choice for the tormented heroine.
Perhaps out of vanity, and irked at the lack of critical esteem accorded in Europe to mainstream Italian directors, with the possible exception (this was just a post-*La Maschera Del Demonio*) of Bava, Freda used English pseudonyms on the credits of the film; several months later he was delighted to overhear a noted French critic expounding on *Dr Hichcock* to the effect that the film could only have been made by an Englishman, because of the great dark literary traditions which made the English — and presumably Irish — master of gothic representations of horror, underpinned by seething restrained sexuality.

Although the career of Riccardo Freda ground to a halt in 1971, following the failure of the made-in-Israel *La Salamandra Del Deserto*, he was still in demand as advisor and consultant on action sequences, and some ten years later directed his last feature: *Murder Obsession*, not widely distributed, but well-regarded in these days of excess.

When Bruce Beresford was making *King David*, Freda was called in to direct exterior action sequences. According to Freda, when he arrived, he was treated dismissively by the Australian, who told the press that this Italian was of no use to the production, as his experience was not suitable. Exit Freda, smarting. The battle scenes in *King David*, which did nothing for biblical history and even less for Richard Gere's career, look as though a little touch of Freda would have been an enormous boons.

RICCARDO FREDA: FILMOGRAPHY

1937: *LASCIATE OGNI SPERANZA*. Co-SCR (Uncredited).
LA VOCE SENZA VOLTO. Co-SCR (Uncredited).
FUCCHI D'ARTIFICIO. Co-SCR (Uncredited).
IL CAVALIERE DI SAN MARCO. Co-SCR (uncredited).
PICCOLI NAUFRAGHI. Co/DIR/Co-SCR/Edit/Played lead under pseudonym Riccardo Santelmi.

1939: *IL BARONE DI CORBO*. Co-SCR.
IN CAMPAGNA E CADUTA UNA STELLA. Co-SCR.

1940: *LA GRANDUCHESSA SI DIVERTE*. Co-SCR.
CENTO LETTERE D'AMORE. Co-SCR/Co-Story.
****CARAVAGGIO, IL PITTORE MALADETTO*. Co-SCR.

1941: *NOTTE DE FORTUNA*. Co-SCR.
****L'AVVENTURIERA DEL PIANO DI SOPRA*. Co-SCR/Edit.

1942: ****BUONGIORNO MADRID!*
****DON CESARE DI BAZAN*. DIR/Co-SCR. This was Freda's first solo directorial credit, and the first of his historical/adventures.
**These films were made for Freda's own production company: ELICA Films.

1943: *L'ABITO NERO DA SPOSA*. Co-SCR.
NON CANTO PIU. DIR/Co-SCR/Co-STORY.

1943-45: *TUTTA LA CITTA CANTA*. DIR/Co-SCR/Co-STORY/Edit. (Re-edited version under title: *SEI PER OTTO, QUARANTOTTO*).

1946: *07. . . TASSI!* Co-DIR (Uncredited)
AQILA NERA/THE BLACK EAGLE. DIR/Co-SCR.

1947: *I MISERABILI/LES MISERABLES*. DIR/Co-SCR. Released in two parts:
Part 1: *CACCIA ALL'UOMO*
Part 2: *TEMPESTA SU PARIGI*

1948: *IL CAVALIERE MISTERIOSO*. DIR/Co-SCR. (Original title: *LE CENTO DONNE DI CASANOVA*)
GUARANY. (Made in Brazil). DIR/SCR
L'ASTUTO BARONE (or: *L'EREDITA CONTESSA*) and *TENORI PER FORZA*. Both one-reel comedies. DIR (Under pseudonym Renato Dery)/ Co-SCR/Edit (Credited to Otello with actors involved). Freda also did voice over commentary for *BARONE*.

1949: *O CACOULHA DO BARULHO*. DIR/SCR/EDIT. (Film made in Brazil)
IL CONTE UGOLINO. DIR/Co-SCR
IL FIGLIO DI D'ARTAGNAN. DIR/SCR (Under pseudonym Dick Jordan).

1951: *IL TRADIMENTO*. DIR/Co-SCR (A.K.A.: *PASSATO CHE UCCIDE*)
LA VENDETTA DI AQUILA NERA. DIR/Co-SCR.
VEDI NAPOLI E POI MUORI. DIR. A.K.A.: *PERFIDO RICATTO (SEE NAPLES AND DIE)* DIR (Freda is also credited with the song 'Vedi Napoli e poi Muori' – one of five songs featured in film).

1952: *LA LEGGENDA DEL PIAVE*. DIR/Co-SCR/STORY.
SPARTACO (SPARTACUS THE GLADIATOR/SINS OF ROME). DIR/CO-SCR.

1953: *TEODORA, IMPERATRICE DI BISANZIO. (THEODORA, SLAVE EMPRESS) DIR/Co-SCR/Co-STORY*.

1955: *DA QUI ALL'EREDITA*. DIR/Co-SCR. (N.B. Title is a pun on *DA QUI ALL'ETERNITA – FROM HERE TO ETERNITY*).

1956: *BEATRICE CENCI*. DIR/Co-SCR/Co-EDIT (Original title: *I MALADETTI*) (Music is credited to Franco Mannino, but Freda was responsible for choice of classical pieces).
I VAMPIRI (LUST OF THE VAMPIRE). DIR/Co-SCR. This film, made in twelve days, marked the first use by Freda of Mario Bava as photographer. Freda also played a small part, as a doctor, in the film.

1956/7: *AGGUATO A TANGERI (TRAPPED IN TANGIERS)*. DIR/Co-SCR.

1958: *AGI MURAD IL DIAVOLO BIANCO (THE WHITE WARRIOR) DIR*
NEL SEGNO DI ROA (SIGN OF THE GLADIATOR). Freda is credited on the film with having directed the battle sequences, although he

Caltiki, mostro immortale

I Giganti Della Tessaglia

was responsible for virtually all exteriors. The interiors were directed (uncredited) by Michelangelo Antonioni. The director on the credits was Guido Brignone who was to have been in charge but was taken ill before shooting commenced. N.B.: Among the four crdited writers was Sergio Leone.

1959: *CALTIKI, IL MOSTRO IMMORTALE (CALTIKI THE IMMORTAL MONSTER).* DIR (Under pseudonym: Robert Hampton).

1960: *I MONGOLI (THE MONGOLS).* Freda is credited on the film with direction of the battle sequence only, but was responsible for several other (mainly exterior) sequences.

I GIGANTI DELLA TESSAGLIA (THE GIANT OF THESSALY/JASON AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE). DIR/Co-SCR. (Original title *GLI ARGONAUTI*). (Some additional sequences were shot after Freda 'finished' the film).

1961: *CACCIA ALL'UOMO.* (A.K.A.: *LE AVVENTURE DI DOX/DOX, CACCIA ALL'UOMO).* DIR (Freda was not responsible for the pre-credit sequence)

MACISTE ALLA CORTE DEL GRAN KHAN (SAMSON AND THE SEVEN MIRACLES). DIR (Following Freda's completion of the film, producer Ermanno Donatti and brought-in director Piero Pierotti reshot several sequences).

MARCO POLO. Freda was only responsible for the battle sequences, which he shot on the same sets when he was making *MACISTE/GRAN KHAN.* (Some footage appears in both films.)

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE, IL RE DEI SETTE MARI (SEVEN SEAS TO CALAIS). Freda choreographed and edited the naval battle climax of this MGM, Rudolph Mate-directd epic

1962: *MACISTE ALL'INFERNO (MACISTE IN HELL/THE WITCHE'S CURSE).* DIR (this film was made in the remarkable, even for Freda, period of eight days).

L'ORRIBILE SEGRETO DEL DOTTOR HICHCOCK (RAPTUS/THE SECRET OF DOCTOR HICHCOCK/THE TERROR OF DR HICHCOCK/THE HORRIBLE DR HICHCOCK. DIR (Under pseudonym: Robert Hampton)

SOLO CONTRA ROMA (THE FALL OF ROME/VENGEANCE OF THE GLADIATORS/ALONE AGAINST ROME). Freda directed the arena sequences.

LE SETTE SPADE DEL VENDICATORE (THE SEVENTH SWORD). DIR/Co-SCR. This was a remake of *DON CESARE DI BAZAN ORO PER I CESARI (GOLD FOR THE CAESARS).* Freda directed the exteriors.

1962/3: *LO SPETTRO (THE SPECTRE/THE GHOST).* DIR (Under Pseudonym: Robert Hampton) Co-SCR (as Hampton).

1963: *IL MAGNIFICO AVVENTURIERO (THE MAGNIFICENT ADVENTURER)* A.K.A. *LE AVVENTURE DI BENVENUTI CELLINI.* DIR.

1964: *GIULIETTA E ROMEO (ROMEO AND JULIET).* DIR/SCR.

GENOVEFFA DI BRABANTE. DIR/SCR/STORY. Made in Spain, the film credits JOSE LUIS MONTER as director.

1966: *LE DUE ORFANELLE.* DIR/Co-SCR.

COPLAN FX18)COPLAN, SECRET AGENT FX18). DIR/Co-SCR. A.K.A.: *AGENTE 777 MISSION SUMMERGAME/FERMATI, COPLAN//THE EXTERMINATORS.*

1967: *ROGER LA HONTE/TRAPPOLA PER L'ASSASSINO.* DIR/EDIT.

COPLAN OUVRE LE FEU AU MEXICO/MORESQUE: DIR (As Robert Hampton)

OBLETTIVO ALLUCINANTE. The screenplay was by Bertrand Tavernier.

LA MORTE NON CONTA I DOLLARI. DIR (Under pseudonym George Lincoln) Co-SCR (As Lincoln)

1969: *A DOPPIA FACCIA:* DIR (as Robert Hampton). The story was provided by, amongst others, Lucio Fulci. Co-SCR (As Hampton).

1970: *L'IGUANA DELLA LINGUA DI FUOCO.* DIR (Under pseudonym Willy Pareto)/ Co-SCR (As Pareto)/ Co-EDIT (As Pareto).

1971: *LA SALAMANDRA DEL DESERTO/TAMAR, WIFE OF ER DIR.* This film was only released in 75/76. It was made in Israel.

1972: *LIZ & HELEN.* This title is listed in the Catalogo Bolaffi directors' index, but no further details/information is as yet traceable.

ESTRATTO DEGLI ARCHIVI DE POLIZIA DI UNA CAPITALE EUROPEA. DIR.

1980: *L'OSSESSIONE CHE UCCIDE/MURDER OBSESSION/FOLLIA OMICIDA/SATANS ALTAR/UNCONSCIOUS/THE WAILING.* DIR/SCR/EDIT.

Lo Spettro

WARNER BROS PRÉSENTE:
FRANKENSTEIN
S'EST ÉCHAPPÉ!...
"THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN"
HAZEL COURT • ROBERT URQUHART • CHRISTOPHER LEE
WARNERCOLOR
FRANKENSTEIN ONTSNAPT!..

VIDEO OBSCURA

By Ernest Harris

King Kong (1933)

Putting on the Agony

Style is something that most people have difficulty actually describing. It is that often indefinable quality that a creator brings to a work of art that lifts it above the shoulders of its contemporaries — that makes it stand out. I use the word "creator" because *style* is not always, despite what die-hard auteurists might think, the product of the director. If we can't always describe style, we all think we know what it is when we see it. There is most definitely a Hitchcock style; we can recognise it instantly and we can even point to the work of other film-makers as being "in the style of" Hitchcock, so identifiable has it become, even to people with little real interest in the movies. Now, just because a film has "style", just because it stands out, doesn't necessarily mean that it has any real value (remember, the *Carry On* series had a very individual style). I still think the most valuable style that can be imposed on a film *is* that of a good director (at heart *I am* a die-hard auteurist!) — for it is then that we confront the artist. But, there are other sources of style that are as interesting if not always equally valuable. This was highlighted earlier in the year when the BBC ran its long-threatened season of Hammer films.

Corporate Punishment

Hammer films still have a large and loyal following and those among them who are still talking to me were getting pretty excited about the prospect of a season devoted to the films of Messrs Carreras, Fisher and Co. As it happens, they got more than they bargained for. Other TV channels raided their vaults to dig up as much Hammer material as possible — thus treating (?) us to Terence Fisher's *Dracula* trilogy with the films shown out of order on three different channels (and shame on ITV for hiding the 1958 *Dracula* away in the 2.00 a.m. slot and even more shame for transmitting what I am assured by those who know about these things was a severely truncated print).

There can be few who would deny that the early Hammer productions (and I'm talking about the tuppenny coloured gothics rather than the penny plain s.f. films) have a style all of their own. But just how good were these films and who was really responsible for the element that has made them so popular with the fans (besides the obvious element of gore that they introduced to the classics)? Most Hammer enthusiasts will tell you that what really distinguished the earlier Hammer gothics is the presence in the director's chair of Terence Fisher. Much as I would have liked Hammer to have had a real stylist at the helm, I'm afraid it just isn't the case. David Pirie notwithstanding, Fisher just wasn't that good a director. He was , as has been pointed out many times, a workman — a competent storyteller when the story was worth telling. Prior to *The Curse of Frankenstein* there is nothing in the Fisher canon to suggest more than a routine talent and as soon as he was deprived of Jimmy Sangster's scripts the talent faltered, and when divorced from Hammer completely the results were such depressing items as *The Earth Dies Screaming* and *The Horror of It All*. Why then are his Hammer gothics so highly regarded by some? They do have their style (their initial popularity was the result of their gore quota — mild by todays standards but enough to cause apoplexy among the critical establishment back in the late fifties), but it can hardly be attributed to Fisher — it is more corporate than individual. The visual look of the Hammer gothics was more a product of the geography of Bray studios and, perhaps more importantly, the production design of the brilliant Bernard Robinson. My *Shock Xpress* colleague, Barry Forshaw, has argued that the Fisher *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* films are superior to those of Hammer hacks like Freddie Francis and Peter Sasdy, the answer seems obvious to me: It isn't that Fisher was *that* good — it's more that Francis, Sasdy et al aren't. Fisher's best *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* entries also had the benefit of Sangster scripts. It is useful to compare Fisher with his American contemporary, Roger Corman. Corman's Edgar Allan Poe series was another example of corporate style in that they were made by a more of less regular team of collaborators. Yet, when the production of the series switched from America to England the resulting films — *Masque of the Red Death* and *The Tomb of Ligeria* were, if anything, even more interesting that the previous films. Even Corman's less captivating movies bear his distinct signature: his personal vision (whatever the genre), something that can hardly be said of non-Hammer Fisher efforts like *Island of Terror* and *Night of the Big Heat*.

Out of the Past

Of much more interest and infinitely more value than the BBC Hammer series was the same channel's long season devoted to the best films of the RKO Radio studios. Here were treasures indeed — the superbly atmospheric film noir, classic thrillers like *The Spiral Staircase* and *King Kong*, superb B-movies and, of course, the wonderful Val Lewton horrors (decidely lacking in today's requisite gore).

Somebody once suggested to me that Val Lewton's admirble reputation was merely the result of his good fortune in having talented directors working for him. Now, Jaques Tourneur, Robert Wise and Mark Robson are certainly film-makers of talent but in the case of Wise and Robson these films were tyro efforts. Tourneur was already a director of some years experience it is true, but all, in interviews, gave full credit to Lewton's guiding hand, taste and imagination, although I think this is self-evident in the consistent high quality and intelligence of the films. Lewton's films, Hammer, even the Arthur Freed musical team over at MGM, are prime examples of corporate style developed studio systems — highlighting the collaborative nature of film-making, maybe at the expense of the more lunatic claims of the Politique des Auteurs!

Did You See Dept.

As this column has been devoted to the question of style and the responsibility for it, it is nice to be able to mention a movie, shown on Channel 4 in August, that spotlights the work of a man who was one of the undisputed visual stylists of the cinema — although, oddly, the role he fulfilled was not that of a director. I refer to the 1947 film *Ivy*. Although directed by Sam Wood, the film was co-produced (and I am sure designed) by the remarkable William Cameron Menzies — his genre films as a director include *Chandu the Magician* (1932), *Things to Come* (1936) *The Whip Hand* (1951), *The Maze* (1953) and the classic orginal version of *Invaders from Mars* (1953). It is something of the distinctive visual style that Menzies' set design (for it is as an art director that he is best known outside the fantasy genre) brought to *Invaders from Mars* that distinguished *Ivy*, a Victorian murder tale featuring an excellent performance by Joan Fontaine in the title role. From the starkly stylised street set of the opening scene as Ivy makes her way to consult a sinister fortune-teller (played by *Bride's of Frenkenstein*'s Una O'Connor) to the frenetic climax when she takes a dive down a lift-shaft in a swirl of organdie, satin, lace and ostrich feathers, this was a production to relish. Maybe not a genre piece but a fascinating example of the work of one of the fantasy cinema's most fascinating stylists.

BURYING HITCHCOCK
An Interview with BRIAN DE PALMA

By Kim Newman

De Palma and De Niro exchange vital statistics

SX caught up with Brian De Palma while he was jet-lagged at the Dorchester on a promotional tour for *The Untouchables*, his David Mamet-scripted remake of the old TV series, with Kevin Costner as Eliot Ness, Sean Connery as Malone, the young T-Man's veteran street cop mentor, and Robert De Niro (who got his start in De Palma's '60s movies *The Wedding Party*, *Greetings* and *Hi Mom!*) as 'Scarface' Al Capone.

SX: Why did you decide to make *The Untouchables* after having done an Al Capone movie of a sort in *Scarface?*

BD: I don't think this is about Al Capone. It's about Eliot Ness and the Untouchables. Al Capone obviously is the antagonist, but it isn't his story. I'd never done a period picture before. I liked the script a lot, and the relationship between Eliot Ness and his mentor Malone.

SX: In the '70s, you were mainly making kind of Hitchcockian thrillers — *Sisters*, *Obsession*, *Dressed to Kill* — and splashy horror films — *Carrie*, *The Fury*. What with *Scarface*, *Wise Guys* and *The Untouchables*, you seem to be getting into gangster films.

BD: I have made a lot of suspense movies and I think I've done that kind of thing to death. There's nothing I can learn in the genre anymore. I do gangster movies basically because I like the scripts, not because I said "hey, I wanna make another gangster movie." I guess I'm interested in them because the gangsters to me are like medieval tyrants, and I've always been interested in megalomaniacal characters. Gangsters tend to be our contemporary feudal princes.

SX: In *The Untouchables*, you move in one sequence towards making a western . . .

BD: That's because I saw the land out there. There weren't any horses in the movie to begin with, but the characters seemed to look good on those horses. It has a lot to do with the terrain. Given those long, flat spaces, the fastest way to get across them is to ride as opposed to an urban stalking, where you seem to creep up behind people from alleys and buildings. There are no vertical shapes.

SX: Did you work a lot from the physical surroundings of major scenes?

BD: Well the architecture and the landscape does dictate how you do a movie to some extent. You get inspired by the shapes.

SX: There are several sequences obviously structured around the places in which they are set — the shoot-out in the station, and the stalking in Malone's cramped apartment . . .

BD: You have to structure a sequence very much around the architecture of the location. Or you build a location to go with the sequence. In both cases, those were real locations. They were not sets. Then you get ideas from moving around the locations and looking at the three-dimensional space. Then you figure out how to stage the sequence within the space. It has a lot to do with finding the space. We looked for that bridge for a long time. We looked all across the United States and Canada. It was like "find me a bridge that looks like this." We had a lot of trouble finding period places. There are only three huge exterior sequences. The bridge where Eliot Ness meets Malone, which is at night — which helps a lot. The Ness house, again a period street — you have to fill it with period cars, take down the antennas, fix all the houses up. And then there's the street they walk across to raid the Post Office. It's hard to find these places without running into modern architecture. Then you have to find interiors to cover the rest of the stuff.

SX: It's usual to make a movie like this on a sound stage.

BD: That was suggested to me. They said "we did it all here on *The Sting*" as if this was a good idea. I hated the way *The Sting* looked. I thought it looked manufactured on the backlot, and it didn't look real to me, but they thought it looked great. They did a good job in *Chinatown*, but that's period Los Angeles, which is a lot easier than period Chicago. Plus we were dealing with an urban story, not something set in the boondocks. You're right down on the main drag and the main drag isn't like it used to be.

SX: Did you have any trouble with the changes in organised crime? Al Capone might look rather tame compared to the character from *Scarface*.

BD: He would be rather tame. I think it's just that the business has gotten bigger. Al Capone in his period probably had more control in one concentrated spot than anyone else. Now there are families fighting for jurisdiction and you've got all the blacks and the South Americans. Everybody's fighting for territory. Plus it's a lot more brutal, especially with South Americans, which is so much what *Scarface* was about. You're dealing with real primitive Indian types who chop people up in the worst kind of ways.

SX: Would Al Capone have been able to cut it these days?

BD: Oh sure. He was quite a remarkable guy, considering that he was under thirty in his heyday. He was thirty-one in '31 or '32, so he rose to power in the '20s when he was twenty. So those pictures which make him look middle-aged are actually of a thirty-year-old man.

SX: Would audiences have accepted it if you'd cast an actor of the right age as Capone?

BD: I don't think it made that much difference. They think of Capone as an older character than he is. He looked older. He was heavier and had that rounding face and premature balding. He looked like he was in his '40s. We went back, as much as we could, to the real Capone. I've seen the original *Scarface*, of course, and Edward G. Robinson, Rod Steiger, Neville Brand — who played Capone on the TV series — but I didn't rescreen the films. We used newsreel footage, people who had known him, as much information as you could glean from his tailors, stuff like that. A lot of those people are still around. A lot of people who knew Al Capone aren't around, of course . . .

SX: . . . because he killed them. What shut his empire down?

BD: The end of prohibition, plus Eliot Ness shutting his business down. If you can shut down the business — if you can get the alcohol or seize the drugs, keep it from coming in long enough so that the criminals can no longer pay everybody off — then you've got a real chance of doing something. Eliot Ness had a lot of other things working for him. The imminent repeal of the Volstead Act meant that illegal liquor went out the window as a way of making a tremendous amount of money. And the Depression. It was as simple as that. There wasn't that much money around. Al Capone would never have been put away for tax evasion if he'd had the kind of control he had before. He'd have just bought his way out of it.

SX: Your film is wildly inaccurate. Did you set out to jazz up history?

BD: Oh yes. Those were decisions made by David Mamet before I got involved with the project. I don't think it made a lot of difference that Frank Nitti shot himself as opposed to being killed by Eliot Ness, and that Wilson and the Ten put Capone away for tax evasion, not Eliot Ness. I read that article in *Time Out* about how we got it all wrong, but I'd known all that stuff before. Plus there are a lot of contradictory stories. Everybody's got their own story about Al Capone and Eliot Ness and some people say he did this, while other people say he did that. I remember reading

an article of the period when Capone is quoted "Eliot Ness, who's he? I've never met him." Then there are all kinds of articles about what Eliot Ness did. There is a lot of mythology involved, and there was even at the period. It's hard to get a straight story. But we do know the basic facts: that Capone was indicted for tax evasion, that he did go to jail, that Eliot Ness had something to do with it. I think he had a lot more to do with it than people give him credit for. When you consider the equivalent problems today, if they could shut down the suppliers, they could kill the business. But, of course, they can't do it.

SX: Were you concerned about the fact that the film does show Eliot Ness, who is supposed in real life never even to have fired his gun, personally killing one of Capone's nastiest henchmen, Frank Nitti?

BD: That's consistent with the material. It may not be consistent with Eliot Ness, but that's what the movie is about. It's all set out in that speech Malone makes, "this is what you have to do to get Capone. If he gets a knife, you get a gun. If he sends one of yours to the hospital, you send one of his to the morgue. That's the Chicago way." Then Eliot Ness says "I'll do anything within the law", which ultimately he goes beyond. It makes a lot of sense if you're working within a totally corrupt world. How are you going to bring someone to justice if he owns the courts? You have to say "I'm going to be judge and jury. I know what's right." It's much more an emotional reaction than a moral one.

SX: It also makes a more satisfying movie finish than an accountant going through ledgers for years.

BD: Absolutely. It's like the whole switching the jury thing. It's not really right. You couldn't do it that way. But if you did it the way you have to do it, the whole audience would be falling asleep as you get a new jury and question them again.

SX: Do you feel you've buried the 'Imitation Hitchcock' tag you used to have?

BD: I still get a lot of questions about it. *Body Double* has a lot of Hitchcock things in it . . .

SX: Alfred Hitchcock would never have made a movie like *The Untouchables*.

BD: I don't think he would have made any of the films they call my Hitchcock films. His attitude comes much more out of a kind of English mystery tradition of the stage and the books than the kind of stuff I was doing. I come out of New York street movies.

SX: Which was when you last worked with Robert De Niro. You've both changed a lot.

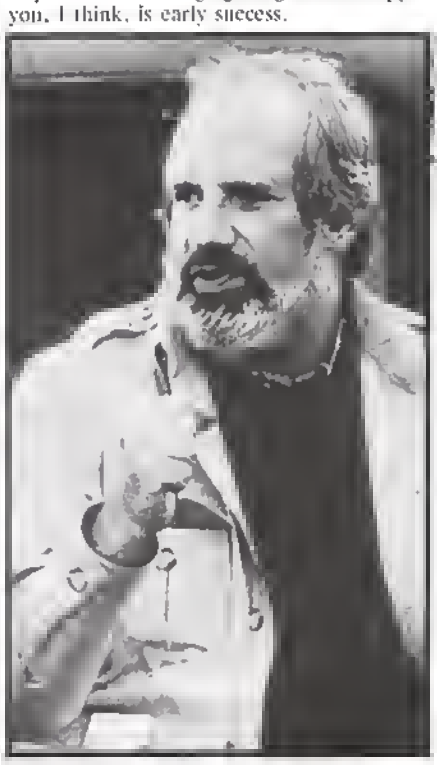
BD: Yes, we've aged, matured. I think your career evolves. The movies get more interesting.

SX: You occasionally have this urge to go out and make something quick and cheap. *Home Movies* wasn't all that long ago . . .

BD: Then I was basically teaching a course. The whole idea of the course was "okay, here we are, we're gonna make a low budget feature, how do we do it? Here's a story I think will make a good movie. We've got to write a script, we have to raise money, find locations . . ." It took them two years to do it. The kids learned a lot. It was a very difficult experience. We had to basically make a movie with students. Most of them have gone on to do more. Mark Rosman did *The House on Sorority Row*. One of my other students was Mark Romanek, who made *Static*, and then Charlie Leventhal did two features and one of my girls has written a lot of scripts. About half of them are doing pretty well. A lot of them got out of the business, because it was so horrible. Which is, I guess, something else you have to learn. The movie came out and was a catastrophe, which is all part of making a low budget picture. You know, begging for people to spend money on advertising and having them pay no attention to you.

SX: You also did *Wise Guys*, a comedy with Danny De Vito and Harvey Keitel, which was another catastrophe. It crept out and died.

BD: I liked it because I thought it was a very funny script and I wanted to do a comedy after so many melodramas. I did start out as a comedy director, of contemporary/political/sociology kind of things. *Wise Guys* is an example of a film where you can't tell if the movie's any good or not because it was released by a company that wasn't there. I think it's important to make a lot of movies, but I don't know if I would have wanted to work under the old studio system, doing five a year with assigned scripts and assigned casts. You know, Louis B. Mayer wants you to start a suspense film on Stage 5 on Tuesday and three months from now you'll be doing a western. You do learn a lot from that, like a lot of directors have learned from growing up in television. You have to make a lot of movies, but not be a man for hire. You have to evolve your own style your own way. The most damaging thing that can happen to you, I think, is early success.



Brian De Palma

SX: You had about ten years of struggle before *Carrie?*

BD: Well, I think *Greetings* was my first success. It got me my first professional jobs . . .

SX: But you still had years of obscurities like *Murder a la Mod* and *Get to Know Your Rabbit* ahead of you.

BD: Those were things I financed myself.

SX: I take it you're out of that.

BD: Well, I put a lot of my own money into *Home Movies*. You can still make a film for 200-300,000 dollars. I did it in 1980. It can be done. A full length feature film, 35 mm, with SAG. I had Kirk Douglas, and my wife, and Gerrit Graham, Vince Gardenia. It's possible.

SX: Do you now develop all your own projects, or are you a hired gun?

BD: You go back and forth.

SX: What do you think is your own personality these days?

BD: The last pictures I wrote and directed were *Blow Out* and *Body Double*. *Blow Out* was like my last real development in whatever it is I'm doing. I don't know where I'm headed next. I'm sort of interested in contemporary politics. But you want something with tremendous characters and story. You know all the pitfalls of practically everything at this point.

SX: *Blow Out* was actually about a filmmaker getting involved in politics . . .

BD: That was stuff I'd been thinking about for years. All my Kennedy assassination and Watergate and politics ideas. Basically, I was interested in the way a big scandal just sort of changes things on the surface for a while as the old money machine just goes on.

SX: Aren't the monolithic Hollywood corporations similar to the average political machine?

BD: They are less stable . . . That's an interesting sort of thought, now. Because of the media you can get established very fast. You know, like Jimmy Carter. Then you get forgotten about very quickly. Everybody seems ashamed even to mention his name. The rises and falls are really a lot faster these days. We have a tradition of setting them up and tearing them down. If they survive four years or eight years, by the time they leave office, they're usually chased out.

SX: Would you like to do a political movie?

BD: I think all my movies are political. It's my fascination with megalomania, which is like the American Story, Richard Nixon and Walt Disney and Howard Hughes and all those guys.

SX: Charles Manson?

BD: That's desperation. You have to be pretty desperate when you have to go out shooting people to get on the cover of *Time* magazine.

SX: Your Al Capone has a very special relationship with the press, almost like a cross between Jeffrey Archer and Mohammed Ali.

BD: That was the way Al Capone was. He was the first gangster to do that. Probably the last. Having a high profile is not how gangsters stay around. What's unique about Al Capone is that he was such a friend of the media. He gave press conferences and sat around with reporters and expounded about his philosophies and everybody thought he was a very colourful, Damon Runyanesque, affable, charming character.

SX: Are you planning to stay within the thriller genre, where you've been pigeonholed?

BD: That's really strange, because my most successful films of recent years have not been thrillers. My last really successful thriller was *Dressed to Kill*. I think I've sort of exhausted the genre as far as finding interesting things to do in it goes.

SX: *Dressed to Kill* was your leanest movie.

BD: You make thrillers, you're interested in pure visual storytelling. They have to be very lean and have long nonverbal sequences and are kind of hallucinatory. That's kind of the thriller in its purest form.

SX: In *Body Double*, you experimented with a story that made no sense at all on a narrative level.

BD: To me it makes a lot of sense. I thought the plotting was *ingenious*. It seemed like a very, interesting story idea to me. It was one of my favourites.

SX: It wasn't very well liked.

BD: I know. It's hard to make movies where you put women in peril any more. You can't really stalk women around any more. It's very difficult.

SX: In *The Untouchables*, the female presence is so marginal that the leading lady doesn't even have a first name, she's just Ness' wife. Is this a final attempt not to be harassed?

BD: That was the nature of the material. It is true that it's difficult to make thrillers with women as central characters who get into peril, because then you get annoyed feminists.

SX: Even though you were depicting strong female characters?

BD: That didn't make any difference.

SX: Where you hurt by the paint-throwing campaigns?

BD: It is sort of unsettling to field a lot of hostile questions about why you keep doing this and why you dislike women so much. You say "it's a murder mystery, I'm running out of victims." It's all right to kill men, but women are out. No one complained when I killed a man in *Sisters*. But that was in '72. Things have changed a lot.

Reviews

THE OPENING OF MISTY BEETHOVEN. USA 1976. Dir: Henry Paris (aka Radley Metzger). With: Constance Money, Jamie Gillis, Jaqueline Beaudant, Gloria Leonard, Terry Hall, Mary Stuart.

The hard-core film industry in America has frequently had pretensions regarding the aesthetic quality of its movies — several of which, it has been claimed, are the equal of anything that mainstream cinema can offer. Perhaps the best example of the finest in hardcore is *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*, and the reason for its much-heralded success is simple — Henry Paris, real name Radley Metzger. Paris first came to notice in 1966 when he achieved considerable success as the US distributor of the breakthrough *I, A Woman*, directed by Mac Ahlberg — now prominent as a cinematographer in the likes of *Re-Animator*, *House*, *Trancers* and many other Empire and low-budget productions. Paris later made headway with nudies such as *Therese and Isabelle* (1968), *Camille 2000* (1969) and *The Lickerish Quartet* (1970).

With the arrival of hardcore and 'porno-chic' came of *Deep Throat* and *The Devil in Miss Jones* he was able to flex his cinematic muscles that bit more, being unrestricted by censorship. By the mid-70s he was approaching his peak, having established himself as one of the finest X-rated film-makers with such classics as *The Afternoons of Pamela Mann* and *Naked Come the Stranger* (1975) with the lewd and lusty Darby Lloyd Rains. But *Misty Beethoven* remains his finest testament.

Very much a pornographic *Pygmalion*, it takes place in Paris, Metzger's favourite city. Gillis, hardcore's finest male performer, plays Seymour Love, a reknowned sex writer who stumbles across street-wise hooker Beethoven (Money) plying her trade in a sleazy porno palace. She intrigues Seymour, so much so that he wages a bet with his lover (Beaudant) that he can transform this wretched slip of a girl into the 'The Golden Rod Girl of the Year' — a title bestowed on only the hottest of sexual athletes. Things go badly at first — he has what amounts to an unwilling patient on his hands — and she certainly lacks the finesse and charm of a potential 'Golden Rod' girl. But before long he succeeds in administering a crash-course in sexual re-education; first comes the seduction of a pilot's wife, airborne in a 747, followed by a 'quickie' at the Opera, and the ultimate challenge of seducing a gay artiste at an art exhibition. Though initially hesitant, Misty confounds her critics and starts to show real promise. Her real test awaits — party socialite Gloria Leonard. Take her and the title beckons . . .

The film's critical and commercial success has generally been attributed to the enthusiastic playing of newcomer Money. Certainly her naivety and apparent innocence has lent much credibility to the story — throughout the movie one gets the feeling that she is having the time of her life. Ironically, she wasn't originally slated for the title role — Paris had opted for French porno starlet Beatrice Harnois, but the latter withdrew late in the day and in stepped young Constance. Sadly, her career in adult films took something of a nosedive after *Misty*. Despite being the highest paid blue-movie star of the time she only appeared in routing pictures like *Mary, Mary, Anna Obsessed* and her comeback/farewell movie *A Taste of Money*, although she did make a cameo appearance in *Barbra Broadcast*, another Paris pic.

Night of the Creeps

REVIEW ROUND-UP

CONTRIBUTORS:
AB: Anne Billson
RC: Ramsey Campbell
NF: Nigel Floyd
SJ: Stefan Jaworzyn
AJ: Alan Jones
SJO: Stephen Jones
KN: Kim Newman

ASTERISK RATING:
***** Exceptional
**** Above Average
*** Good
** Tolerable
* Disposable
0 Unacceptable!

	AB	RC	NF	SJ	AJ	SJO	KN
AMERICAN GOTHIC Brent Walker/Virgin 1987	***			**½	*½	**½	**
BLISS Entertainment 1986	**½		***½	***½	*½		***½
THE BOY WHO COULD FLY 20th Century-Fox 1986			**		**		**½
CREEPSHOW 2 New World/Entertainment	*		*	*	*	*½	**
DEMONS 2 Avalar 1987				**	**½	**	*½
JAWS – THE REVENGE Paramount/UIP 1987		*	*		*		*
THE LAMP H.I.T./Braveworld 1986				**	½	*½	**
NIGHT OF THE CREEPS Tri-Star 1986	*½	***	***	***	***	***	**½
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 3 DREAM WARRIORS New Line/Palace 1987	****		****	***½	****	****	***
PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE Mainline 1986	*****		***	****	*****	*****	****
A RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT Warners 1987	***½				**½	**½	***
SPACEBALLS MGM/UIP 1987	*		*		½		0
THE STEPFATHER ITC/Virgin 1986	****½		****	****	****		****
SUPERMAN IV: THE THE QUEST FOR PEACE Cannon 1987	*	½	**		½	*	*½
WITCHBOARD Paragon/Guild 1986		**½		*½	½	*½	**
THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK Warners 1987	***		***	***	****½		***

The mainstay of *Misty* is Gillis' portrayal of Seymour, without doubt his finest performance in what seems like a lifetime of adult movies. Gillis has rarely been required to do little more than act the superstud, but Paris consistently writes good parts for his actors, and *Misty* gives Gillis a role he can really get his acting teeth into. Even with his fine performance here and in subsequent films, he's never quite made the best of his undoubted talents — as the only 'legit' role he's played was that of Lindsay Wagner's friend in Bruce Malmuth's underrated *Nighthawks*.

This picture's 'message' is familiar in most of Paris' other films — sex is fun, and Paris mixes his philosophy with high-class raunchy sex and mush lounge-in-cheek humour. But with *Misty* he goes deeper: using Seymour's character he explores the emotional depth of a person who grooms a sexual machine, and has the 'machine' discover that she may not be a better person for her experience — something most porno movies stay firmly away from. The concept that sex can corrupt is well investigated here, and for once porno appeared to have grown up, giving us characters with dimensions producing great empathy — porn with a heart.

It would be unfair to say that after *Misty* everything Paris did was an anti-climax, but despite the raunchiness of his 1981 offering *The Tale of Tiffany Lust* (with Arlenee Manhatten), he's not been able to recreate the earthly excitement and tension produced in *Misty*.

Its credentials notwithstanding, plus the fact that it's eleven years old, the film still had not had a general showing to cinema audiences in Britain. A truncated version was submitted to the late Greater London Council in the hope of a London-X rating, but even the GLC refused to issue a certificate. However, a 'soft' version did appear on the Cinema Club circuit in the early 1980s, and HVS released an even softer version on video a few years later, but since the Video Recordings Act it has surely been withdrawn . . .

(Brian Mumhews)

THE LAMP. USA 1987. Dir: Tom Daley. With: Deborah Winters, Andra St Ivanyi, James Hustun. HIT Bravenorld.

Scripted by a former Professor of Behavioural Sciences, *The Lamp* appears to be his treatise on totally irrational behaviour. Still, if you can swallow a plot that pits a bunch of high school students against a wicked genie of the lamp, then you will no doubt be able to tolerate the fey heroine (whose idea of dress sense is to wear three blouses simultaneously over a pair of pyjama buttons), an opera singing security guard (who, to my mind, Could Not Be Killed Too Soon) and the presence of executive producer Deborah Winters (who performs three different roles in the movie and is tiresome in all of them). Censorship appears to obliterate any justification for the whole endeavour. *(David Taylor)*

The Untouchables

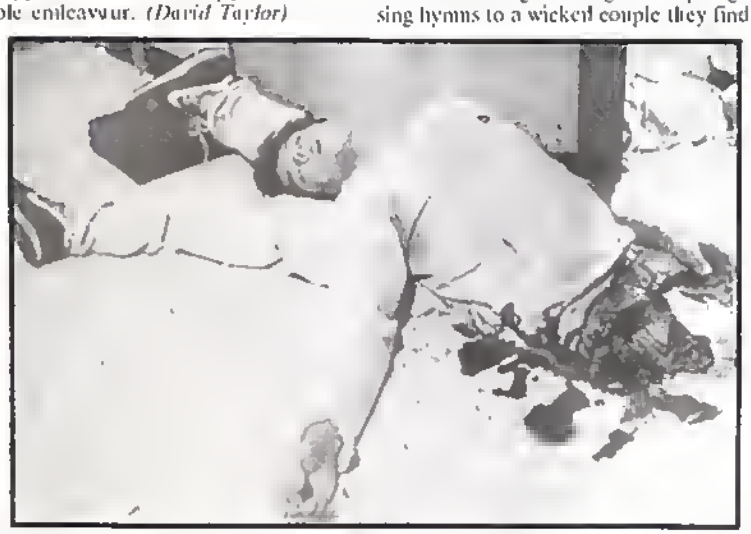
EVIL COME, EVIL GO. USA 1973. Dir/Scr: Walt Davis. P: Robert C. Chinn. With: Cleao O'Hara, Sundra Henderson, Jane Louise, Rick Cassidy.

'No man is safe from the "Preacherwoman"! She's a Man-Hating, Hymn-Humming Hellcat!' reads the ad line for this grindhouse cheapie. It's so obscure that not even Don Willis (*Horror and Science Fiction Films*) or Michael Weldon (*Psychotronic Encyclopedia*) list it, and it's so absurdly repulsive that it deserves the SX seal of tedium recommendation as a sleazo piece of cinemascum that plumbs depths beyond even *Psycho From Texas* or *Smanpar* when it comes to the combination of dullness and the distasteful. Sister Sarah Jane (O'Hara), the man-hating, hymn-humming hellcat, is a short, plump, nearly-middle-aged woman with an annoying mid-western twang. She wanders around singing, playing her guitar, hassling people in the streets, and seducing disgusting men whom she then kills. 'Will you strike with your blade/'til they've all finally paid/there's another victim every single day,' runs the poignant c&w theme before segueing into its singalong chorus 'Sarah Jane, Sarah *Jane*/Sister Sarah, you're insane.' While hanging about on a street corner playing the accordion, Sarah meets a taller, ever-so-slightly thinner woman with funny teeth (Henderson), and recruits her into 'the Secret Order of Complete Subjugation', whose purpose is to 'rid the world of pleasurable sex and evil men'. No sooner has the disciple signed up than she finds herself being tied to a bed by the preacherwoman ('this is symbolic, I must bind you to the bed as you are bound to me and the Lord') and the film presents us with the least erotic lesbo/bondage scene in the cinema as this pair of uglies grope each other for ages and ages. The pair go out and sing hymns to a wicked couple they find making out in public ('how dare you beget in front of me!'), and start killing more men. 'Think of all the sweet, innocent girls we've saved from this stinking, sweaty body,' remarks Sarah after a particularly inept bit of Lewisian slaughter. This is one of those video/drive-in disposables that lasts a little over an hour but seems longer than *The Sacrifice*. Cleao O'Hara comes on like a younger Edy Massey and ranks as one of the least likeable screen psychopaths of all time, and director/screenwriter Walt Davis probably decided to make this a slasher/gore movie because even he knew the girls were too bloated to bring it up to scratch as a softcore time-waster. The surprise ending features nothing in particular happening as Sister Sarah wanders off while her theme song reprises. *(Kim Newman)*

THE UNTOUCHABLES. USA 1987. Dir: Brian De Palma. With: Kevin Costner, Sean Connery, Charles Martin Smith, Andy Garcia, Robert De Niro. Paramount/UIP.

Over the years the cinema of Brian De Palma has proved nothing if not compulsive. One of the few directors whose work succeeds in producing violent ambivalence in viewers and critics alike — it's possible to love his films and hate yourself for doing so, as well as resenting his ability to manipulate through blatent re-use of Hitchcock's and his own set-pieces while marveling at his technical sensibilities and florid direction — he is still capable of transcending his influences and producing work which is stunning in its own right. For all its indulgences, *Scarface* was an object lesson in escalating obsession and megalomania — in terms of both Pacino's performance and the nature of incident. *The Untouchables* contains none of his wayward wanderings or tacky flamboyance, but is probably as near to a perfectly judged, 'straight' product as he is likely to get.

Essentially a classic crime yarn, with more than a few liberties taken with the actual events, *The Untouchables* evinces a maturity generally absent from his films. Here at last the set-pieces are well integrated — the 'station steps' sequence being outstanding in its orchestration and execution — and performances are treated as ensemble acting rather a series of hazy sketches with one or two central roles. Connery is slightly larger than life as Malone, Ness's mentor, Costner is quietly persuasive as Ness, determined to do 'right', and De Niro's Al Capone is an exercise in deterioration from smiling villainy to pathological ranting. Ennio Morricone contributes a thoughtful, brooding score, emphasising atmosphere and avoiding the bombastic counterpoint of sound and action often present in De Palma's collaborations with composers, particularly Pino Donaggio. And the violence is simply stunning . . . Essential viewing. *(Stefan Jaworzyn)*



The Lamp

THE MONSTER SQUAD. USA 1987. Director: Fred Dekker; Screenplay: Dekker and Shane Black. With: Andre Gower, Duncan Regehr, Jack Gwillim, Tom Noonan. Tri-Star.

The Monster Squad is a flawed movie with one big problem: it's fifteen years too late for its potential audience.

A respectful hommage to the Universal creature-features of the thirties and forties, it's a monster movie for kids, and like Milton Subotsky's 'horror' movie for the younger mind-set, *The Monster Club*, it comes close to patronizing its viewers.

The title squad are a bunch of brats who read *Fangoria*, Stephen King novels, and watch videos. Led by newcomer Gower, the kids discover Dracula (played as a psychotic by Regehr of *V* infamy) is in town to cause trouble. Assisted by the Wolfman, Mummy, Gillman, and the Frankenstein monster, the count is searching for an ancient amulet that will plunge the world into evil chaos. Of course the kids are the only ones who realise what's going on and set out to stop him, which inevitably they do with the help of the Frankenstein monster, who defects to their side when he develops a soft spot for little Ashley Bank, the gang's token girl.

Fortunately, the kids are on the tolerable side of Spielberg-cuteness, but they're still too squeakly clean. Even if you adopt the mental age of an eleven-year-old whilst watching, you're still going to have problems liking this bunch.

That aside, the film also suffers from lack of invention. From an impressive FX-laden opening, superbly shot by Bradford May, with Van Helsing (Gwillim) and the villagers of Transylvanianburg storming the count's castle a hundred years previously, the movie soon runs out of steam. Noonan, the serial murderer in Michael Mann's *Manhunter*, gives the best performance as the Frankenstein monster, but even he is a disappointment, not being used to any great effect. Neither the Mummy and Gillman do anything of any real consequence, while the predictable plot is weighed down by some stale jokes.

Although his competence as a director is clearly improving, Fred Dekker's main failing is still his inability to sustain narrative while both writing and directing, though in this case co-writer Shane Black (*Lethal Weapon*) must share the blame.

Fifteen years ago this could have been a success, but today's younger audience have grown up with Jason, Freddy, and Romero's zombies, not Karloff, Lugosi, and Carradine, which goes a long way to explain *Monster Squad's* box-office failure in America. *(Philip Numan)*

RETURN TO HORROR HIGH. 1987. Directed by Bill Froelich. With Lori Lethin, Alex Rocco, Vince Edwards, Brendan Hughes, Scott Jacoby. New World.

One wonders what New World think they're playing at when they release *House II* and *Creepshow 2* theatrically, but only put this small but decent item (*not* a sequel to the 1974 *Horror High*, a.k.a. *Twisted Brain*) out on video. Like *Frankenstein 1970* and *House of the Seven Corpses*, it's about the blighted production of a horror film based on actual events, but in its playing with the illusion-and-reality theme and parodic subversion of the high school splatter genre, it comes over as a low-budget cross between *The Stunt Man* and *Wacko!*. Detectives pore over the bloody site of the latest massacre and a demented screenwriter flashes back to the series of murders which has plagued the production of *Horror High*, an exploitative film about a real series of murders, and within the flashbacks we get cleverly misleading scenes which are either further flashbacks to the original killings, extracts from the film in progress or the confused nightmares of the leading lady. Typical is an intense teenage rape scene, which is interrupted firstly by a sleazy producer trying to make sure an actress' breasts are in shot and then by the leading lady, who protests at the mistreatment of women in schlock films like this. Some serious gore, and lots of jokes at the expense of crass Hollywoodians who make claims to be into psychological thrillers with an important message, and then line up the next exploding tit shot. *(K.N.)*

BLISS. 1985. Directed by Ray Lawrence. With Barry Otto, Lynette Curran, Helen Jones, Miles Buchanan, Gia Gardes. Entertainment.

Ad exec Harry Joy (Otto) drops dead during a party but wakes up again, unsure whether he has returned to life or been reborn in a twisted afterlife of his own imagining. Normality has been fractured: the supporting cast come down with cancer, an elephant sits on Harry's car, and a Thatcherite nurse in a mental home turns boy scouts into ginger snaps. A weird Australian movie, from a novel by Peter Carey (who also wrote, in a different frame of mind, *Dead End Drive-In*). It goes on too long and has an awkward hippie idyll near the end, but while Harry is trying to cope with an urban world that's cracking up as fast as he is, it's very funny and pretty pointed. *(K.N.)*

The Monster Squad

HIDE AND SHRIEK (aka AMERICAN GOTHIC). GB 1987. Dir: John Hough. With: Rod Steiger, Yvonne DeCarlo, Michael J. Pollard. Virgin.

What starts off as a routine revolting-young-people-in-peril(er) develops into an enjoyable romp through the backward/backwoods loonies genre, with Steiger and DeCarlo presiding over a family of adult retards who dispatch their victims by way of swings and skipping ropes. Steiger manages to be remarkably restrained until the end, when he finally gets his Big Hammy Speech, but the film's most notable coup lies in its espousal of what Clive Barker would call 'Universal Degradation Time', the message being that you'll have to be every bit as bonkers as the bad guys if you want to get out of this set-up with your limbs intact. *(A.B.)*

PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS. USA 1987. Dir: Nigel Dick. With: Clayton Rohner, Talia Balsam, Ray Sharkey, Vernon Wells, Paul LeMat. Blue Dolphin.

This is the debut feature of Dick, veteran of promo videos for the likes of Madness and Big Country. But, unlike other vid-kids turned film directors (stand up Steve Barron and Julien Temple) he's equipped himself with a solid script and turns out a ripping yarn about a yuppie architect who finds a corpse in his bathroom and an enigmatic message on his answering machine. After a creaky start, the plot gets into gear when he goes on the run through the sleazier side of Los Angeles, pursued by bent cops and a magnificently cocaine-crazed Ray Sharkey. A load of apparently incidental details along the way ultimately mesh into an exceedingly pleasurable thriller with a neat sense of irony. No gore, but there's a sockeroo nightmare sequence and a spectacularly nasty death. *(A.B.)*

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 3: DREAM WARRIORS. USA 1987. Dir: Chuck Russell. With: Robert Englund, Heather Langenkamp, John Saxon, Patricia Arquette, Craig Wasson. Palace.

While aimed rather more than one would wish at the mainstream teen audience, this is nevertheless several cuts above the dreadful *Freddy's Revenge*, and develops the nightmare theme nicely by having its teen protagonists explore their own dream powers to fight back against the razor-fingered creep, who by now has emerged as an all-purpose cult anti-hero with a snappy one-liner for every occasion. Wes Craven has a hand in the story, which has Nancy (Langenkamp) reappearing as a doctor (not very convincingly) and Craig Wasson reprising his being-buried alive act from *Body Double*. The characters, even minor ones, are more than mere cannon fodder and their fates are an amalgam of both their own worst fears and some bloody good special effects (sinews extracted for use as puppet strings and so on). And there's not a suicide pact in sight. *(A.B.)*

COMBAT SHOCK. USA 1985. Dir, Scr & P: Buddy Giovinazzo. With: Ricky Giovinazzo, Veronica Stork, Mitch Maglio, Asaph Livni. Troma.

What's this? A Troma pick-up actually worth picking up and watching? Incredible — but true! More to the point, *Combat Shock* should be required viewing. Forget *Platoon*, *Hamburger Hill* and *Full Metal Jacket*. Buddy Giovinazzo's celluloid primal scream is the only movie this year that really gets to grips with the angst of the Vietnam war. And although the Troma tag leads one to expect a bargain-basement *Last Hunter*, nothing could be further from the truth. The mood and style of this intense little film lifts it head and shoulders above the average *'Nambo* junk movie to remain imprinted on the memory as an extraordinary and rather traumatic viewing experience. Yes, it's bloody. And yes, it's shocking. But on so many different purposely sick levels. *Combat Shock* is uncompromising in intention and defiantly down-beat — it is a work of pure brilliance.

Directed in a sub *cine-verite* style recalling *Toys Are Not For Children*, *Combat Shock* begins with a gory nightmare as ex-Vietnam veteran Frankie relives his Saigon days. Waking up in a grim New York suburb, the harsh realities of his life become apparent. He lives in a dilapidated apartment with his nagging wife Kathy and their deformed baby son. He can't get a job and won't call his father for money who presumes he died in action anyway. His mindless existence revolves around hustling in the street, standing in unemployment lines and coping with his drug addict friend. Life has cheated Frankie

all the way down the line and unfortunately the worst is yet to come. As the truth behind the unfolding flashbacks becomes clear, we finally realise the futility of Frankie's grip on the past and come to understand his desperation. And with his life shot to hell, there is only one escape route open to him. But will the baby fit in the oven?

Full of resonances never even attempted by Coppola, Stone, Kubrick etc, *Combat Shock* has an impact one rarely finds in *any* film, let alone a sleazy Troma movie. As kitchen sink cliche turns constantly into grim and gritty non-cliche, the stereotypical cyphers usually found in such *Taxi Driver*esque material — child prostitutes, loan sharks, junkies and muggers — actually come to represent a warped view of the Meaning of Life blank generation style. The urban decay surrounding Frankie's brutalised universe actually mirrors his mental stability and this fractured tableau is hard not to empathise with or feel every step of the way. And it features one of the most awesome heroin fixing scenes (with a coat-hanger!) in screen history.

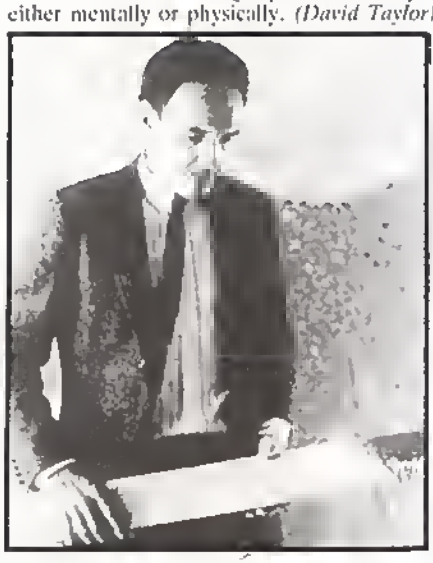
Combat Shock is best described as *Platoon* meets *Eraserhead*. As a relentless assault on the senses, it is quite unlike any film I've seen as it defies the conventions of genre imitators. And it's enough to restore your faith in the independent exploitation industry who have never been afraid to show it like it is even though they fail 99% of the time. Only *Combat Shock* isn't a failure but probably the best vision of post-Apocalyptic sparseness ever committed to film. Shoot a gook to see it!

(Note: Before being picked up by Troma, this film was known as American Nightmare*)*

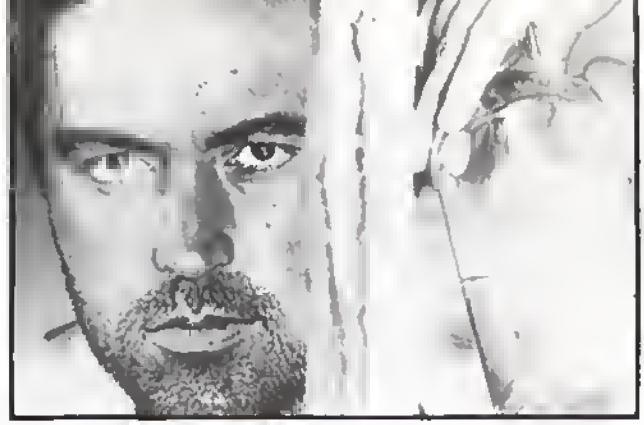
Alan Jones

THE STEPFATHER. USA 1986. Dir: Joseph Ruben. With: Terry O'Quinn, Jill Schoelen, Shelley Hack. ITC/Virgin.

A low-key, unsettling and (ultimately) frightening view of a maggot-ridden American Dream. Hack and Schoelen play a young divorcee and her daughter who gradually come to realise that the charming, affable man of the house is actually a multiple murderer obsessed with establishing the perfect home and family. Their inability to match his pure (for that read 'puerile') vision of domestic bliss earmarks them as additions to his ever-growing list of victims. Both female leads are exceptional, but it is O'Quinn as the titular patriarch who delivers a rivetting portrait of psychopathy: genial demeanour exploding into uncontrollable rage, then abruptly shifting into torrents of incomprehensible self-justification. Director Ruben maintains perfect control over his material, gradually tightening the screws on the audience minute by painful minute. Not the most comfortable viewing experience of the year, either mentally or physically. *(David Taylor)*



The Stepfather



Extreme Prejudice

EXTREME PREJUDICE. USA 1987. Dir: Walter Hill. With: Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe, Michael Ironside, Maria Conchita Alonso, Rip Torn, Clancy Brown. Guild.

A great cast blow themselves to pieces in slow-motion in Hill's hommage to *The Wild Bunch*. The basic script (the story is co-written by John Milius, who is presumably responsible for sentiments along the lines of 'I love drinking with mah buddies. I love America' . . .) pits one-time friends Nolte, now a Texas Ranger, and Boothe, a coke-crazed drug baron operating from Mexico, against each other. Into the feud step Ironside and his gang of ex-Nam vets, armed to the teeth and ready for a massacre. This is duly supplied, along with shotgun blasts, machine-gunnings, explosions, CIA covert operations, ambushes, a bona fide showdown, and gallons of blood. Glossy, fast-moving, wildly violent and pretty dumb, *Extreme Prejudice* is one of the most wholly entertaining action pictures to appear for some time. Watch for Ironside in *Nowhere to Hide*, an acceptable conspiracy/actioner starring Amy Madigan. *(Stefan Jaworzyn)*

HAMBURGER HILL. USA 1987. Dir: John Irvin. With: Tim Quill, Courtney B. Vance, Steven Weber, Anthony Barrile, Michael Patrick Boatman. RKO/Palace.

Hot off the hell-train from Nam comes this turkey. Falling flat on its face between the cathartic *Platoon* and Kubrick's bizarre *Full Metal Jacket* — successful in spite of its chaotic structure — *Hamburger Hill*, like the Grand Old Duke of York, goes nowhere fast. A platoon of unsympathetic rednecks stagger through a '69 Nam until they meet their nemesis in the eponymous slope (pun intended? Beats me . . .). A crass script with appallingly stereotyped characters (po' black mo'fos; mean-faced gooks; earnest beer-swilling blockheads who love America) throws in as many cliches as possible — some tedious sequences are even given a second run-through — until the longeurs render the climactic assault devoid of tension or drama. If *Apocalypse Now* took the Nam mythos and turned it into a psychedelic, pseudo-literary nightmare, and *Platoon* provided a deconstruction of the mythos of stripping away the layers of bullshit, then *Hamburger Hill* represents a return to the misconceived ideals of WW2 John Wayne vehicles like *The Sands of Iwo Jima*. Made at the same time as *Platoon* (but with far more resources used to no effect . . .), *Hamburger Hill* cannot even be seen to have succeeded on a humanistic level, the characters being dull and lacking in depth of personality. A grave disappointment. *(Stefan Jaworzyn)*

THE BIG EASY. 1986. Directed by Jim McBride. With Dennis Quaid, Ellen Barkin, Ned Beatty, John Goodman, Marc Lawrence. Recorded Releasing.

Under the credits, the camera swoops low over the swamps while foot-tapping cajun music plays. It zooms through built-up New Orleans at dead of night to come to rest on a dead body floating in a pool in front of a mafia-front building. Slightly bent but wholly charming cop Quaid draws the case, and soon unmasks a gang war shaping up between old guard mafiosos and voodoo-worshipping black drugs dealers. Meanwhile, Assistant District Attourney Ellen Barkin is out to nail Quaid on a corruption charge, and also is falling in love with him. The first wholly satisfying movie from McBride, who made *Glen and Randa* and the remake of *Breathless*, and a dazzling cross-breed of screwball romance and cop thriller. It falters a little in the finale, owing to an overly obvious surprise villain, but is otherwise square on the nail. A much better use of New Orleans and its attributes — nice buildings, distinctive music, terrific food — than either *Angel Heart* or *No Mercy*. *(K.N.)*

A RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT. USA 1987. Dir: Larry Cohen. With: Michael Moriarty, Sam Fuller, Andrew Duggan, June Havoc, Evelyn Keyes. Warners.

Cohen can always be relied on for quirky reinterpretations of the horror myths, and here he pitches his tone a long way from the Stephen King book. Moriarty plays an anthropologist who arrives with his brat in Jerusalem's Lot, Maine, to find the place populated by vampires who proceed to steamroller him into seeing down their long and honourable history for posterity. This is one of those rare films which actually delves into the practicalities of being one of the undead: how to adjust your lip-gloss after partaking of your daily pint, for example, or how to breed a race of daylight-tolerant underlings. Cohen's typically slipshod technique and dodgy production values don't detract from the fact that there's an incisor of a mind at work, whittling away at aspects of the American Dream and offering enough satire, allegory and moral dilemma to sharpen a dozen sets of dentures. *(A.B.)*

RIVER'S EDGE. USA 1987. Dir: Tim Hunter. With: Crispin Glover, Keanu Reeves, Ione Skye Leitch, Roxana Zal, Daniel Roebuck, Joshua Miller, Dennis Hopper. Hemdale/Palace.

When Samson (Roebuck), a psychotic misfit, strangles his girlfriend, he takes his school friends to view the body, prompting a crisis of loyalties within the group. Should they help him or inform the authorities . . . ? Layne (a regally demented Glover) believes the former and enlists the help of Feck (Hopper, crazy again), an ex-biker/nuisance minus a leg who lives with a rubber doll and supplies the kids with 'Feckweed'. Matt (Reeves) and Clarissa (Leitch) feel otherwise, but Layne's overbearing personality leads them to keep a low profile. But Feck, far more twisted than anyone had bargained for, solves their problems for them . . .

An exceptional debut from Hunter — harsh, gritty and realistic — with superb performances, the calculatedly over-the-top ravings of Hopper and Glover notwithstanding . . . The kids here look *real* — speech, habits (dope, booze, sex, violence) and mannerisms are thoroughly convincing, as are the traumas they experience in the course of the film. Tension builds relentlessly throughout, producing an intense feeling of unease. Inspired, uncompromising and often disturbing, *River's Edge* is one of the year's best. Highly recommended. *(Stefan Jaworzyn)*

THE NIGHT OF THE SORCERORS/LA NOCHE DE LOS BRUJAS. Spain 1973. Dir: Amando de Ossorio. With: Simon Andreu, Kali Hansa, Jack Taylor, Maria Kosti, Lorena Tower.

Picture this, if you can . . . A tedious voodoo orgy is taking place in 'Bumbasa', 1910. A girl is tied up, whipped until all her clothes fall off, raped and finally decapitated by a native chief. The other merry-makers drink her blood. In the midst of the orgy soldiers turn up and shoot everyone in sight. Damn! The camera zooms in on the girl's severed head, which sprouts fangs, turns to face us and screams . . . Amando de Ossorio, one of Spain's many hack horror directors, is at it again.

'Bumbasa', the present. A group of foolish human beings in jeeps appear in order to wander through the jungle until they chance across the voodoo site. By a quirk of fate the executed natives rise that very night as zombies, just in time to grab the sexy photographer who is drawn to the orgy area by forces beyon mortal comprehension. Apprehended, she is tied up, whipped and bitten by the once-decapitated girl, now zombie supremo. The photographer also loses her head, is duly eaten (in negative), and her head turns around and screams . . .

Head conveniently replaced, the photographer is incarnated with the leaderene as a leopard, and together they attack the expedition campsite. All is chaos as the duo push a professor's face into photographic developer and miss him up real good, abduct another girlie and bite her, and a shrunken head appears in a tent. The remaining female protagonist knifes one of the two remaining males who felt obliged to rape her. Here Ossorio kindly provides an extended 'running through the jungle' sequence, culminating in the surviving girlie being captured by the leopard women/zombies who tear her flesh with their claws. From the depths of the scripwriter's cerna emerges the 'hero', who throws a handful of bullets on a voodoo fire, all of which shoot off in the right directions to kill zombies. After rescuing the heroine, the couple escape in a jeep, splattering the odd zomb, our man having failed to notice that his companion has been smitten with that old black magic . . .

Not one of Ossorio's better films, *La Noche* bears passing resemblance to the turgid jungle epics of Jesus Franco (specifically the disastrous mess of *The Devil Hunter/Maadhuga Manhunter/ Il Cacciatore di Uomini*), with its gratuitous nudity, sadism and endless meandering through the darkness. Lacking the visual qualities and generally successful atmospheres of the 'Blind Dead' series, this one grinds predictably along with only the cannibalism-in-negative scene and occasional use of slow-motion (also a staple of

Franco's cinema) to add minimal lustre. Francisco Sanchez' photography is glossy but aimed squarely at the 'travelogue with gore' end of the market, while Fernando Morcillo's score relies too heavily on wonky organ tones and the inevitable voodoo drums to produce anything other than cliches.

Ossorio's exploitation career stretched back almost as far as Franco's, commencing with westerns in the mid-60s and moving rapidly on to horror by the late 60s. Possessed of sporadic flair, Ossorio — like so many of his compatriots — had been far too happy to lurch on to convenient bandwagons (exorcism, zombies) and draw his own, initially inspired, 'Blind Dead' saga out well past its welcome, though even *La Noche de los Gaviotas* had its moments with a gory heart extraction and an impressive image of crabs scuttling across dismembered body parts. While the majority of his genre product appears to have reached either the UK or USA, there is doubtless a large body of work (sexploitation particularly) which is yet unseen outside the continent . . .

Selected Filmography

1965 I Tre del Colorado.

1968 Malenka — La Nipote del Vampiro/Malenka the Vampire/Fangs of the Living Dead.

1971 La Noche del Terror Ciego/Tombs of the Blind Dead.

1972 Las Garras de Lorelei/When the Screaming Stops/The Lorelei's Grasp.

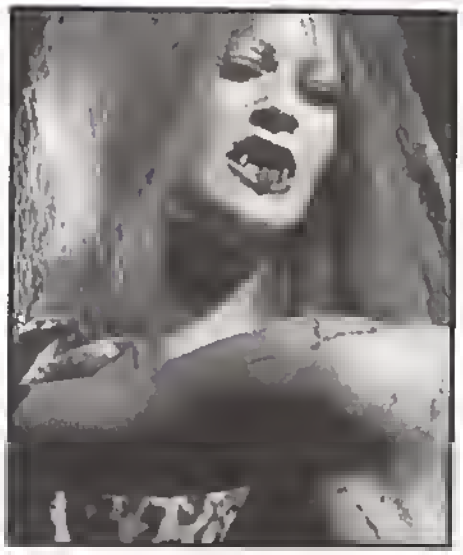
1973 El Ataque de los Muertos Sin Ojos/Return of the Evil Dead/Return of the Blind Dead. La Noche de los Brujos/The Night of the Sorcerors.

1974 El Buque Maldito/Horro of the Zombies. La Endemoniada/Demon Witch Child.

1975 La Noche de los Gaviotas/Night of the Seagulls.

Note: While Michael Weldon assigns *Planeta Ciego* (1975) to Ossorio, Don Willis credits it to Leon Klimovsky. It was released in the US in 1980 as *The People Who Own the Dark*.

Stefan Jaworzyn



THE NIGHT OF A THOUSAND CATS/LA NOCHE DE LOS MIL GATOS Mexico 1972. Dir: Rene Cardona, Jr. With: Hugo Stiglitz, Anjanette Comer, Gerardo Cepada, Christa Linder.

When I'm asked "what's the worst film ever made about killer felines?" (a question that pops up all the time, needless to say), the first answer used to be Ted V. Mikels' "*The Corpse Grinders*". But not any longer . . . Not after viewing this Mexican mess, because this south-of-the-boredom snooze-fest wins bottom-of-the-barrel honors. Even the title is idiotic-sounding.

Hugo Stiglitz stars as a suave playboy-type who woos the ladies and always ends up taking his latest conquest back to his secluded castle, complete with a mute, Tor Johnson-lookalike servant (kudos to Gerardo Cepada for being the only one in the cast who looks like he's having fun). When we first meet him, he's showing off his dank mansion to an expendable blond bimbo, and you know there's going to be trouble when Hugo gets a maniacal glimmer in his eyes and begins spouting off about his unique "collection". Of course, she doesn't suspect a thing (obviously, she hasn't read the title of the film she's trapped in), but soon the secret is out! Hugo has a huge indoor cage crammed with noisy cats, which are fed with the freshly ground-up hunks of his lovely ladies. Just to make matters sillier, Hugo also keeps his victims' pickled (and very rubbery-looking) heads in glass cases.

When Hugo isn't at home with his human-hungry pets, he likes to hover above sun-bathing beauties in his helicopter and annoy them with his cocky peeping tom-routine. Along the way he meets up with Anjanette Comer (popping up after a few American duds in order to collect some quick rent money), and the whole production limps along at a snail's pace -- taking itself all to seriously, even during the climactic 'cat-attack', where some off-screen cat-wrangler heaves the bewildered pussies through the air and into the camera.

A lot of *Cats* is pretty ludicrous (or couldn't you guess), but the inherent silliness of the situation is quickly negated by the somnambulistic tone of the whole production -- it's low on violence, gore, excitement, and basic entertainment value. What it does have in abundance is lethargic performances, bikini-clad non-actresses, and hideous early-70s fashions, such as bell-bottom stretch-pants and leather hip boots . . . Sure, some of the film's continuity problems could be from the fact it was hacked by 20 minutes when it was snuck through Customs, but even at seventy minutes long, it's still padded to the sprockets with travelogue footage and endless shots of Hugo flying his chopper.

The only positive thing I can say about *Night of a Thousand Cats* is that it's miles ahead of Cardona Jr.'s later cash-in exposes, such as *Survive*, *Tintorera* and *Guyana, Cult of the Damned* (all featuring Mr. One-Note-Performance himself, Hugo Stiglitz). You can give me one of his dad's flicks instead anytime, such as the immortal *Wrestling Women Vs. The Aztec Mummy*. Now there's *real* film-making!

(Steve Puchalski)

NEAR DARK. USA 1987. dir: Kathryn Bigelow. With: Adrian Pasdar, Jenny Wright, Lance Henriksen, Jenette Goldstein, Joshua Miller, Bill Paxton, Tim Thomerson. F/M/Entertainment Film Distributors.

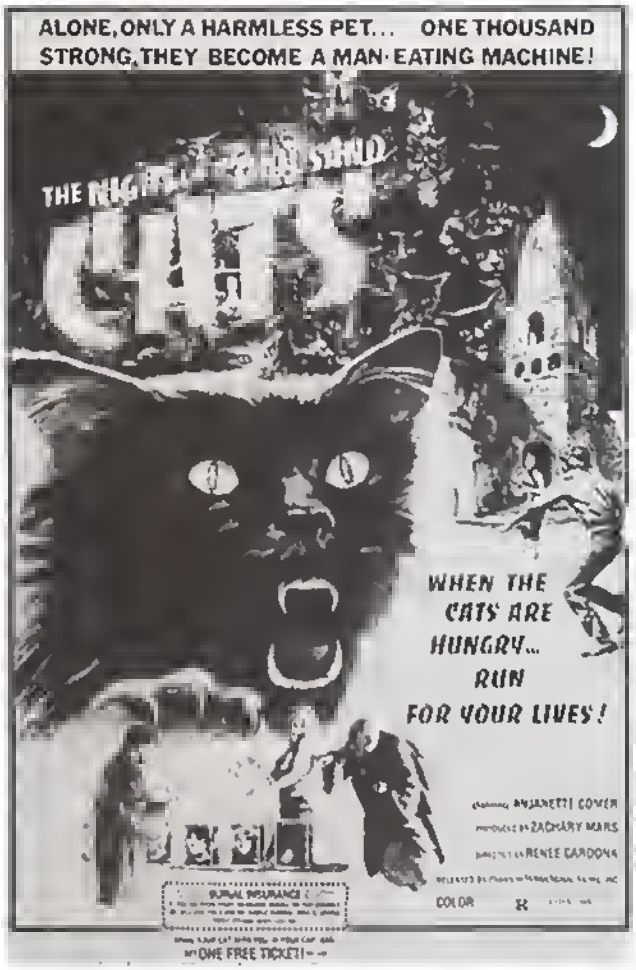
Referred to in the press notes as 'a romantic thriller', *Near Dark* is a fine example of a classy, low-budget horror movie. Containing many similar plot elements to *The Lost Boys* but employing them far more successfully, *Near Dark* is an intelligent, beautifully crafted, atmospheric vampire story (although the word is never mentioned and there's nary a fang on view) which simultaneously amuses and thrills. Like *The Lost Boys*, this postulates the hypothesis that it's possible to *enjoy* sucking blood while also pointing out the painful 'realities' of the situation. Bigelow, co-director of *The Loveless* and co-writer of *The Hitcher*, acquits herself admirably with an arty, scary and incredibly *sleazy* portrait of a nomadic vampire clan (headed by Henriksen), producing a couple of the year's most impressive horror set-pieces along the way. Ominous, brooding photography and an unobtrusive but effective score work together with fine performances – ranging from Paxton's manic intensity to Wright's seductive underplaying – to produce an inspired and inspiring movie. Recommended.

(S.J.)

THE LOST BOYS. USA 1987. Dir: Joel Schumacher. With: Jason Patric, Corey Haim, Kiefer Sutherland, Jamie Gertz, Corey Feldman, Dianne Wiest. Warners.

So. Another 'vampire' film . . . Here we have all the pitfalls of the teen nerd movie and feeble forelock-tugging generic reference defect film combined in one dreadful product. Imagine every vampiric concept you've seen or read in recent years, hurl it into a blender with *The Goonies*, a couple of John Hughes films, vapid pop vids, and add a peculiar but undeniable undertone of homo-eroticism and what do you have . . . *The Lost Boys*! Think of the idea first, then think of the dizzying but superfluous camera pyrotechnics, then remember the script . . . A bunch of photogenic boys and girls pose and pout interminably, a random narrative is sporadically interjected, rock songs burst forth regularly, the film goes nowhere pronto. Entirely lacking in sympathetic (hell, even interesting) characters, *The Lost Boys* epitomises the market for watered-down kiddie fare conceived by middle-aged crackpots whose hearts are indelibly imprinted with a dollar sign. *The Lost Boys* . . . ? More like *The Mild Bunch* . . .

(S.J.)



Spider Baby

SPIDER BABY, OR THE MADDEST STORY EVER TOLD/THE LIVER EATERS/CANNIBAL ORGY USA 1964. Dir: Jack Hill. With: Lon Chaney Jr., Carol Ohmart, Jill Banner, Sid Haig, Mantan Moreland.

Any film that has Lon Chaney Jr. *singing* the title song has my vote for weirdest opening of a horror film, and the rest of this low-budget excursion into depravity doesn't disappoint either. Director Jack Hill, who kept American drive-ins in business with such exploitation classics as *The Big Doll House* and *Switchblade Sisters*, started off his career with this disturbing little horror-comedy. And if you can imagine a cross between the 1960 *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Eraserhead*, you've got the basic idea for the tone of this obscure classic.

Welcome to the Merrye House, where the entire family is afflicted with the rare and mysterious Merrye's Syndrome. It seems that at the age of 10, each member of the clan contracts the "Family Curse", and while their bodies continue to grow normally, their brains begin regressing until they become babbling, blood-thirsty geeks. Eventually, they even go beyond a pre-natal state and turn into inhuman savages . . . Of course, no one beside the trusted family chauffeur, Bruno (Lon Jr.), knows the full truth about The Merryes' secret (he refers to their condition as "rotting of the brain"), and he has his hands full covering up the sporatic bloodshed and keeping things under control. You see, there's Ralph, a drooling, bald-headed man-baby who likes to hide in the dumb-waiter; Uncle Neil and the oldsters, who are forever-unseen in the cobwebbed basement; and pretty little Virginia, who runs about with twin butcher knives, playing "spider". In fact, Virginia is the first to spill blood when she hacks up a Stepin-Fetchit clone and saves his severed ear as a souvenir (I wonder if David Lynch saw this film before writing *Blue Velvet*?).

To complicate affairs, a pair of scheming, distant relatives suddenly show up to lay claim to the mansion — sticking their noses into family business and disturbing the relative peace and quiet. After a dinner of bugs, undressed rabbit and fungi soufflé, these money-grubbers decide to stay the night, which turns out to be a BAD decision. Though the graphic violence is simply intimated, the constant creepiness of the proceedings go far beyond the boundaries of good taste (especially for the '60s) — especially when Virginia coyly seduces her normal Uncle into a game of Spider, tying him to a chair and setting live spiders at his legs. Add a bit of cannibalism, a hint of dismemberment, and lots of grim humor, and *Spider Baby* becomes an overlooked cult classic for shock junkies.

Chaney, who was stuck in some of the worst so-called "horror"-fodder during the late-'60s (*Dracula Vs. Frankenstein*, *Hillbillies in a Haunted House*), gives a fine, sympathetic performance as the faithful servant who promised to care for the family until the lineage dies out; and all the Merrye members are appropriately child-like and maniacal, with veteran B-movie actor Sid Haig stealing every scene as the thumb-sucking Ralph. In fact, the ensemble works so well together that the group bears striking similarities to the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* crazies and their perverse antics.

Though the low-budget is evident throughout, *Spider Baby* succeeds in large part because of its stark black and white photography by Alfred Taylor, twisted performances and tongue-through-cheek humor. Most of all, Jack Hill should be commended for creating a true vision of madness. Alternately hilarious, touching and *very* nasty, it's easily his most original movie; and though the film was originally hampered by poor distribution and constant title changes, I'm hoping it will soon find its demented niche. It's one of my favorites.

(Steve Puchalski)

CREEPSHOW 2. USA 1987. Dir: Michael Gornick. With: Lois Chiles, George Kennedy, Dorothy Lamour, Page Hannah, Tom Savini. New World/Entertainment.

Could this be the worst film ever from New World? It certainly makes their other stinker of the year, *House II*, look like a towering masterpiece of horror cinema . . . It's hard to know exactly who to blame for this mess – Stephen (the Godzilla of horror fiction) King for writing the stories, George Romero for scripting, or Michael Gornick for directing . . . While Gornick's photography contributed much to the fine appearance of *Day of the Dead*, he seems to have learned nothing from his mentor. Each of the three sorry episodes is thoroughly atrocious, lacking pace, atmosphere, and convincing performances (Lois Chiles excepted). Looking animation is below the standard of even the worst TV fodder, effects are abysmal (imagine the menace created by a bunch of floating garbage bags . . . or the sheer terror produced by a wooden Indian wobbling creakily around . . .) and the punch-lines are bereft of the impact found in even the worst Amicus movies. Barring an amusing orgasm joke and some gratuitous butcher squashing in the Chiles episode, there's absolutely nothing here to recommend even on a turkey level. Rock bottom.

(S.J.)

Creepshow 2

THE VIDEO VAULT

of Barry Forshaw

Palace Plums

Tired of run-of-the-mill video fare? Tired of video companies that supply reliable (rather than hit-or-miss) star vehicles? Well the PVG group can always be guaranteed to mix the sublime with the ridiculous — and any company that was prepared to bring Sam Raimi over to defend his *Evil Dead* in a protracted court action has to win the hearts of readers of this magazine, right? (Incidentally, Palace's Andrew Kirkham informs me that *Evil Dead II* on video may undergo a severe BBFC pruning — they were obviously lying in wait for this one.)

Anyway, the current batch from PVG sports a definite first. You've seen films that run outtakes behind the end credits (Jackie Chan's *Police Story* being a recent example) — but *Biohazard* (from the ever under-achieving Fred Olen Ray) has to be the first film with a self-conscious out-take as its actual final shot — i.e. the hero's inability to take the film's *Alien* clone monster seriously (and who can blame him?). Angelique Perryjohn forsakes the carnal pleasures of her more customary roles to play the world's most unlikely nuclear physicist, and Ray makes sure that this monster-on-the-loose fartigo is every bit as inept as his earlier efforts.

Also from PVG, *Hyperspace* aka *Gremloids* is Todd Durham's low-budget *Star Wars* parody with one really clever joke (the rocket sled forest scene in *Empire* replayed with flying shopping trolleys in a supermarket), while Alan Smithee's *Ghost Fever* lacks even one smile-provoker in its witless tale of multi-racial cops vs. spooks from the Deep South (unless you count two species appearing *behind* a group of Southern Belles in a canvas on the wall). *Trick Or Treat* is the flagship feature, and Charles Martin Smith's first movie as director will be loved or loathed by headbangers everywhere in equal proportions, but *Toxic Avenger* will provoke irritation by its drastic censorship excisions.

Melting Moments

I'd just like to add my vote for Jim Muro's off-the-wall *Street Trash* (Avatar) with its marvellous melting winos and well-observed central characters (even if most of them are squeaky clean actors under all the grime). Lively Raimi-style camera work, and not too many censor cuts for video (the exploding breasts have gone, though).

Second Bite

One of the great assets of the video industry is the "retrospective" opportunities it grants we completists. Miss Bava's *Planet of the Vampires* or Cottafavi's *Hercules Conquers Atlantis*? Don't worry — they'll probably turn up. And if the breathtaking technical skills of James Cameron, displayed in *The Terminator* and *Aliens*, made you, like me, want to take another look at his debut feature, *Piranha II: Flying Killers* — RCA have again provided us with the opportunity.

Well, were we wrong? After Joe Dante's lively *Piranha*, the sequel initially seemed to be bitten (sorry!) by the usual follow-up disease (viz *Jaws II & III*) i.e. a pale reworking of the original with less interesting characters. And a second look regrettably confirms this — but there's certain evidence of Cameron's nascent editing skills, and anybody who loves his other films had *got* to catch this prentice effort, correct? (Oh yes — look out for Lance Henriksen, later to be ripped in two by Cameron's Alien Queen).

And while we're with sequels, a quick mention for CIC's re-issue of Honda's *King Kong Vs. Godzilla*, famous for the line "Major — you can't shoot King Kong for he's holding my sister in his hand!" You've seen it all before — but why do these endless Toho products keep us watching? Is it for the hilarious natives of Kong Island (Chinese in black face)? Or the equally hilarious notion that a man in a baggy ape suit could ever match Willis H. O'Brien's wonderful stop-motion? Still, after ten years or so, I did want to see it again. I'm all right now.

Alliterative Awfulness

With *Mountaintop Motel Massacre* (New World) we're in very familiar territory — scythe-wielding psycho picks off hapless victims. In this case, it's a middle-aged woman (don't worry, I'm not giving anything away) whose slaughtered daughter does a little posthumous prompting. Zilch characterisation goes a long way to instilling a glazing of the viewer's eyes in this one, and director/writer Jim McCulloch's shock tactics have been judiciously trimmed (one victim whose cheeks are pierced by the dotty matriarch is glimpsed so briefly as to be almost subliminal).

New Blood

A new video company has appeared on the scene called "Sheet Entertainment" — and their first horror product is something called *Geek*! In the classic Tyrone Power movie *Nightmare Alley*, Power ended up as the unseen depraved thing kept in a cage to entertain Carnival audiences. Here, the Geek of the title is a toothless backwoodsman with evil designs on the customary disposable teenagers. The most diverting thing on view here is the demise of the eponymous maniac — offed by a combination of fish-hooks and magnesium flare.

Ouija Boards — their care and maintenance

From Guild, *Witchboard* is an above-average supernatural outing directed by Kevin S. Tenney (who is not, one fervently hopes, related to Del Tenney of *The Horror of Party Beach*). What struck me most about this one (about a young woman — the improbably named Tawny Kitaen — menaced by the spirit of a dead child via an ouija board conjuration) is the care taken to establish a relationship between the two male leads (Todd Allen and Stephen Nichols) — we're even encouraged to *change our minds* about them — when did you last see a genre film that tackled something like that?

Grisly occult carnage is briefly glimpsed at strategic points — a medium, after having her throat cut, is propelled through a window to be impaled on a sun-dial. But if *Omen*-style slayings are your meat, spend your shekels elsewhere — and — oh yes — don't think I'm putting all my weight behind this one — it's just that it struck me as a little more ambitious than a lot of the stuff that comes my way (I should warn you, however, that this one didn't go down well at the recent SX/City Limits exploitation festival at the Scala).

Mind The Doors

Most people who've seen Argento's *Deep Red* remember the villain's grisly demise via a part of the body caught in a moving lift. A similar fate — fairly well staged — befalls a character in Chuck Vincent's *If Looks Could Kill* (PVG) — and the victim is actor Jamie Gillis (here called J. Gillis, presumably to distinguish this from his work in a genre that only utilises one part of his body).

Vincent's film explicitly invokes a comparison with Hitchcock — a great mistake, because *Rear Window* this ain't. A young photographer (appallingly played by Tim Gail) is hired to spy on a young woman via her apartment window — bloody murder ensues. Vincent shows a latent skill for editing his confrontations, but one has to say that so far Hitchcock's rotund ghost can remain undisturbed.

Irwin Allen fans of the world, unite!

Now somewhere out there, legions of Irwin Allen fans are poring over their video collections of complete runs of *The Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea* — after all, look at the clamour for re-runs of *Lost In Space*. Well, just for these panting hordes, Warners have issued *City Underneath The Sea* (aka *One Hour to Doomsday*) — a pilot for an unsold TV series, in which Stuart Whitman commands a futuristic submarine city menaced by an advancing meteor. Richard Basehart plays the President — and didn't he notice that the "flying saucer" scout ship used by his old vessel, the Seaview, is still doing service here (or is Allen re-using familiar footage?) . . .

Dario Delights

The real plum in the Warners' pie, however, is Dario Argento's brilliant *The Cat O'Nine Tails*.

receiving its video premiere. All the Argento fingerprints are fully evident in this grisly tale of a blind reporter (Karl Malden) and a younger colleague (James Franciscus) tracking down a deadly murderer — and here Dario's sometimes wayward plotting is diamond hard in its chilling development. Not to be missed — and most readers of this journal will be renting another Warners title in the same batch (another video premiere) — George Romero's *Knightriders*, previously unseen in this country. This is the one in which George put his familiar zombies in cold storage for a vision of Arthurian knights as modern-day bikers, with the now well-known Ed Harris as the Arthur of the piece, Sir William. All Romero completists will want to see it — but as in *Jack's Wife/Season Of The Witch*, it's clear that the director's more at home with his living dead.

Also from Warners, the better-than-average *Exorcist* clone, *The Possessed*, with James Farentino as an ex-minister confronting a malefic presence at a girls' school. The final confrontation has a genuine charge, given a TV movie's restrictions. And to complete a bumper Warners bundle, Craven's disappointing *Deadly Friend* is now on video — has to be seen by all Cravenites, even though something went seriously awry.

More Fury

From Polygram, Douglas Grossman's *Raging Fury* is familiar stuff, but demonstrates that there's life in many an old formula. When a young girl is (accidentally) responsible for a double impalation (amazing how many disused, 45 degree railing spikes there are around) she grows up — who wouldn't? — thoroughly screwed up. And at the first provocation, she's slicing and dicing in grand style. The catalyst? She's a teacher (Maureen Mooney), coming up against slightly-more-recalcitrant than usual pupils, who end up shish-kebabed and otherwise disassembled. The student ringleader is called Dickens — clearly evidence that American exploitation movies know their English Literature. This mayhem is of the quick cut variety (in both senses of the term), so has been left largely untouched by the BBFC.

CREDITS

Biohazard USA 1986 D. Fred Olen Ray. With Aldo Ray, Angelique Pettyjohn.
Hyperspace USA 1986 D. Todd Durham. With Alan Marx, Paula Poundstone, Chris Elliot.
Piranha II — Flying Killers USA 1984 D. James Cameron. W. Tricia O'Neill, Steve Marachnik, Lance Henriksen.
King Kong Vs. Godzilla Japan 1963 D. Inoshiro Honda. W. Harry Holcomb, James Yogi.
Street Trash USA 1986. D. Jim Muro. W. Mike Lackey, Vic Noto, Bill Chepil.
Mountaintop Motel Massacre USA 1986 D. Jim McCulloch. W. Bill Thurman, Anna Chappell, Will Mitchell.
Ghost Fever USA 1985. D. Alan Smithee. W. Luis Avolos, Sherman Hemsley, Jennifer Rhodes.
Geek! USA 1986 D. Dean Crow. W. Christine Noonan, Jack O'Hara, Dick Kreusser.
Witchboard USA 1986 D. Kevin. S. Tenney. W. Tawny Kitaen, Todd Allen, Stephen Nichols.
If Looks Could Kill USA 1986 D. Chuck Vincent. W. Tim Gael, Kim Lambert, Alan Fisher.
City Underneath The Sea USA 1971 D. Irwin Allen. W. Stuart Whitman, Rosemary Forsyth, Robert Colbert.
The Cat O'Nine Tails Italy/France/W. Germany 1971 D. Dario Argento. W. Karl Malden, James Franciscus, Catherine Spaak.
Knightriders USA 1981. D. George Romero. W. Ed Harris, Gary Lahti, Tom Savini.
Raging Fury USA 1986 D. Douglas Grossman. W. Christopher Stryker, Maureen Mooney, Christopher Cousins.

VIDEO COMPETITIONS

HORRORS

Courtesy of WARNER HOME VIDEO, we have SIX copies of the fabulous all-star musical version of LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, directed by Frank Oz. Released on video on November 23rd and worth around £80 (retail), all you have to do to win one is answer the following three questions correctly. The first six correct replies the editor can actually focus on will receive a copy of this classy song and dance number . . .

1) What happened in the original ending of this version?
2) Name three movies starring Steve Martin.
3) Name the monster plant in the new *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Closing date for entries is January 1st, 1988. Winners to be announced next issue. Please indicate whether you require VHS or Betamax. The competition is open to UK residents only — such is life . . .

THE LAMP

Courtesy of BRAVEWORLD and WINSOR-BECK, we have SIX copies of Tom Daley's debut feature THE LAMP to give away. Released on video on November 5th for rental only, THE LAMP tells of the eponymous magic object and the fate befalling anyone foolish enough to rub it . . . The first six correct answers to the following questions will receive a copy . . .

1) Name two other feature films with genies.
2) Who stars in the TV series *I Dream of Jeannie?*
3) Which actor/body-builder was the torso of the monster based on?

Closing date for entries is January 1st, 1988. Winners will be announced next issue. Please indicate whether you require VHS or Betamax. The competition is only open to UK residents — there's no justice . . .

VIDEO COMPETITION WINNERS

It was harder than expected to persuade Fang to judge the competitions, but after we'd prised his jaws open the lucky winners emerged as follows:

EVIL DEAD WINNERS

Keith Beavers, Mark Harrison, Gerald Houghton, John Hunt, Robert Jones, C. Watmore.

DEADLY FRIEND WINNERS:

Mark Baker, R. Chapman, Carl T. Ford, Adam Hooper, James Morton, Keith Sargent.

OF CHAINSAWS, CUTS AND CANNON

By Philip Nutman

The Family!

Tobe Hooper Interviewed

The interview took place at Tobe Hooper's house in Beverly Hills in August. Hooper still defies the Hollywood mould; quietly spoken, shy and retiring considering all he's been through in recent years . . . Here he discusses the fortunes and misfortunes of his *Chainsaw* films.

SX: Even though it was made in 1974, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was still fairly mild for its time, even when compared with, say, William Girdler's *Three on a Meathook*. So why the minimal gore?

TH: It was very deliberate because of the ratings. *TCM* was a reaction to my previous film, *Eggshells*, an artistically well intentioned picture about the end of the peace movement. After that I realized I didn't really know how to make a commercial feature. Prior to *Eggshells*, I'd made a *Mommy Pop* type of thing about Peter, Paul, and Mary, which ended up as a PBS special.

Anyway I was aware of the problems of hanging the girl on the meathook, so I developed a relationship with the MPAA before I started shooting. Originally, *TCM* was going to be a PG movie. Well, I explained to the guy at the MPAA that we were going to hang this girl on a meathook and how could we do it and get that rating? 'Impossible' he said. What, even if I don't show the spike entering her body, if it's implied rather than shown? 'Out of the question' was his response. Anyway, I got what I thought were certain commitments so the film would have a PG rating, which of course turned out to not be the case. I'm still amazed it got an R because everytime we did something I called the MPAA to check things out. But regardless of all that, I didn't feel it was necessary to have an extreme amount of blood-letting upfront on screen because I didn't want to echo *2000 Maniacs* or any of those bloody movies that look like they're shot on Kodachrome. So that's why in that scene all you see is dried blood on the wall behind her, left over from a previous engagement with the meathook. In *TCM2* I felt the audience wanted more than we had given them in 1974, and although it wasn't buckets and buckets, it still didn't get a rating. I guess it was down to the L.G. character having his brains beaten out with the hammer and when he was skinned. Of course, I didn't show him having his face removed, just put back on (laughs), but Tom Savini's makeup job was kind of gory so I shot the scene with an amberish glow to diminish the nastiness. Nevertheless, I still think it should have got an R rating.

SX: Apparently you had numerous problems with Cannon on that picture; what's the full story?

TH: What happened was this. On the day before we were due to start, Cannon flew down to Texas to inform me they were cutting a week from the schedule and that I'd have to deal with it by rewriting. Fortunately, Kit Carson was on location with us so we were able to sit down to do some fiddling with the script which didn't seem to terribly hurt the story at the time. Then I allocated some scenes to the second unit that just didn't work out.

It was the lousiest second unit direction I've ever seen. The guy went off on his own tangent. In my mind it had been very well talked out and he knew exactly what to do. For instance, there's a scene where Yuppies are massacred in an underground parking lot. The scene was shot but was terrible, and it was something any good second unit director could do. But this guy tried to add his own interpretation to something that was already laid down in history. There was this scene of Leatherface breaking out of the back of the catering van. Well, I went with when I saw the footage. The doors slam open and there's this blinding light like Leatherface is standing in the *Poltergeist* closet. Then all the Yuppies have a sleepdog expression come over their faces and he just steps out and hacks them to bits. The second unit director believed the Yuppies should be under his spell; well, I invented Leatherface and I didn't realize he had those powers (laughs). It was totally in conflict with my concept, and I didn't have time to go and reshoot those scenes. So that was the first thing I tore out of the movie. Then Cannon tore out Dennis Hopper's back-story that told you about his character.

The story was that Stretch, the radio dj, knew who this guy was because he used to go with her mother years ago. She grew up hearing about this Texas Ranger. You know, there's only twelve or twenty of them or something like that, and they're kind of legendary characters with their motto 'One riot, One Ranger'. So she grew up with these stories about this wild guy. Once she reads about him in the paper, making a fool of himself, a cowboy chasing chainsaws, looking for these killers for fifteen years because they slaughtered some of his brother's kids in the first movie, so she knows who he is, and there is a relationship there that has not been developed. Also, Enright had used her mother as bait to entrap Stretch's uncle in a drugs bust, so when he sets her up as bait for the maniacs the whole situation has come full circle, and there was a terrific symmetry to the story.

In addition to this, it becomes clear that Enright is not right in the head; he's drinking lots of mescal, hallucinating after eating the worm you know, chainsaws coming out of walls and surrounding him – stuff like that. Again, I shot everything up to the point where he has the hallucination, then handed it over to the second unit. Seemed simple. Especially with storyboards. But, surprise, that stuff didn't work out either.

The story could, in fact, live without that sequence anyway, but Dennis's transition into madness was much more satisfying if you had the information about his relationship to Stretch, and all that stuff about his gun. "My gun is God's gun", and shooting off his magnum. But that material made the film nearly a reel longer than Cannon wanted, and we are at a time when 2, 4, 6, 8, or 10 reels can comfortably support the concession stand, or that is some people's line of thought at least. I don't know whether it was the type of theatre they had the film booked into, or what, but the shorter the movie became, the happier everyone else was.

I don't have a problem with that as I think it's a good movie, despite the material that was deleted. And because we were on such a tight schedule to get the movie into theatres, Cannon didn't have enough time to truly fuck it up like they had done with *Lifeforce* and *Invaders From Mars*.

Is this true? I hear they've banned the movie in Britain?

SX: Yes, but there are various bootleg copies going around.

TH: Thank God for that. So long as people get to see it, I just hope they're good copies.

SX: What's the new film you're planning?

TH: It's called *Whose Woods These Are*, and it's written by Richard Christian Matheson. It's a great script, one of the best I've read in years, and has a spiritual quality that's akin to *Poltergeist*, but it's definitely going to be a white-knuckler. And I hope to start shooting by the end of the year.

Note: The above project has now been temporarily suspended, although he intends to return to it in the future. His next film will be *Double Vision* for Cinevest, scripted by Mick Garris. It also looks extremely likely that he will be making a film for Empire Pictures – a big-budget affair which they hope will be their move out of the B-picture arena . . .

SHOCK! HORROR! IN STOKE ON TRENT AND LEICESTER

It happened in Stoke on Trent about 5 years ago and now it's happening in Leicester, it's... the opening of a shop, big enough to house one of the largest selectiuons of: Imported and UK Film magazines and books, including: Fangoria, Mad Movies, Cinefantastique, Cinefex, Shock Express, Samhain, Starlog, Prevue, Starburst, L'ecran Fantastique, and Monsterland, hundreds of issues, including many rare items. Also a huge selection of posters, badges, postcards and t-shirts. Plus much, much more!

The Stoke on Trent shop is called 'Fantasy World', and can be found at 10 Market Square Arcade, Hanley. (Tel: 0782 279294), and is open now! The Leicester shop, which opens in late October, is called 'Another World' and is situated at 23 Silver Street. Full details of both shops and their comprehensive mail order catalogues is available by writing or telephoning 'Fantasy World' at the above address.

Opposite: A satisfied customer.

HUTSON'S HORRORS

Shaun Hutson Picks His Top Cinema Horrors

Shaun Hutson (pic: Peter Colebourn)

Asking a horror writer to pick out his ten favourite fright films of all time is a bit like giving a fat kid a blank cheque and expecting him to come out of a sweetshop with a single Mars Bar. The choice, as the cliche goes, is endless. But, all horror films *do* not and should not contain half-wits in ice hockey masks and portable tool chests pursuing pubescent teenagers with IQs slightly lower than their temperatures. There is more to the genre than that. And, working on that premise, horror reaches every kind of film and every genre of film-making. Which, unfortunately makes the task of selecting ten even more difficult. However, truly great films are ones which leave an indelible mark, either on your heart, your mind or, in the case of some good horror films, on your underwear. So, described below are ten films which have each made an impact on me for different reasons. All are great films and each one, in its way, has influenced me in some way in my life.

THE EXORCIST. USA 1973. Dir: William Friedkin. With: Ellen Burstyn, Jason Miller, Max Von Sydow, Linda Blair.

Even now, 14 years since its release, it's still the cinematic equivalent of being hit over the head with an iron bar. Friedkin builds suspense brilliantly, helped by William Peter Blatty's excellent script and superb performances from all his cast, especially Ellen Burstyn as the possessed child's mother. Memorable scenes abound particularly the first appearance of Linda Blair fully possessed (complete with a complexion that wouldn't look out of place on any MacDonald's employee), the infamous crucifix masturbation and, of course, the final exorcism. But, as with all great horror movies, it is sometimes the quieter moments which send chills down the spine. For instance, Jason Miller listening to the recording of the demon's gibberish only to be told it's English spoken backwards, or the quite unnerving sequence in which he visits his mother in the asylum, and, of course, Lee J. Cobb's detective calmly telling Jason Miller that the murdered Burke Dennings (Jack Macgowan) was found with his head "turned completely around. Facing backwards." *The Exorcist* is a superb achievement and I, for one, still cannot watch it without making sure all the doors and windows are shut first. One of the few films which has ever kept me awake at night. Quite a feat when some can't even keep me awake inside the cinema . . . .

THE OMEGA MAN. USA 1971. Dir: Boris Sagal. With: Charlton Heston, Anthony Zerbe, Rosalind Cash, Paul Koslo, Lincoln Kilpatrick.

Second version of Richard Matheson's superb *I Am Legend* and, yes, I know, not a bit like it. However, the opening sequence of Charlton Heston thriving alone around a deserted San Francisco, and also his hunt for the 'nest' of zombies led by Anthony Zerbe are very suspenseful. I can remember seeing this as a thirteen year old and it made a very deep impression on me. Even now it's still a good action picture, despite the fact that Heston himself supposedly dislikes it. No sweat, Chuck, I thought it was great. One of the few films of its day (1971) not to 'cop out' inasmuch as the 'hero' gets killed and director Boris 'watch out for that propellor' Sagal isn't frightened to kill off some kids if necessary. Well worth seeing.

BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA. USA 1974. Dir: Sam Peckinpah. Starring Warren Oates, Isela Vega, Gig Young, Robert Webber, Emilio Fernandez.

Peckinpah's is not the horror of possession or germ warfare but the horror of alienation. This superb and appallingly underrated film was one of the most personal movies Peckinpah ever made. Shot in his beloved Mexico it's a mixture of modern day Western and Edgar Allen Poe, as Warren Oates, a struggling piano player in a seedy Mexico City bar, goes hunting for the head of the man who impregnated the daughter of a rich landowner (Fernandez). The prize is $10,000 dollars, or at least that's what Oates is offered by Gig Young, the actual prize is a million dollars and, after wiping out most of the cast and a fair few extras, Oates sets about claiming it.

It's a superbly complex movie because Benny's (Oates) motives for going after the head are two-fold. Firstly he wants the ten grand and, secondly, Alfredo Garcia also spent some time with his girlfriend (Vega) before getting himself killed in a road accident. Benny is robbed of his revenge but persuades Elita to lead him to Garcia's grave where he digs up the body and prepares to take the head. Needless to say, he's prevented by the simple expedient of being whacked over the head with a shovel by two villains who also want the valuable item. Benny is buried alive and eventually surfaces almost re-born, but also thinking that *he* is Alfredo Garcia. Having regained the head he drives along with it in his car holding one-way conversations with the fly-swarming appendage. (Severed heads not being generally very talkative his enquiries go unanswered.)

This one is definitely a 'love it or hate it' movie but, even so, it certainly doesn't deserve to be included in that bloody awful tome *The Golden Turkey Awards*. This one is prime beef, served up by a master. Nihilistic, violent, depressing and disturbing. What more could anyone ask for?

The Exorcist

TAXI DRIVER. USA 1976. Dir: Martin Scorsese. With: Robert De Niro, Jodie Foster, Cybil Shepherd, Albert Brooks, Peter Boyle, Harvey Keitel.

Another film about the horrors of urban

Suspiria

alienation. De Niro is Travis Bickle, a Vietnam veteran who, through his inability to integrate with the rest of society (and also his inability to take his girlfriend to decent films) becomes, as he puts it "God's lonely man". Destined to find fulfillment only in a single minded obsession to save a twelve year old prostitute, Iris (Foster) from the clutches of her pimp, Sport (Keitel). New York is depicted as a hell on earth. Travis himself calls it "An open sewer, full of filth and scum." In his job as a taxi driver he meets and sees the dregs of the city, keeping a diary of his day-to-day existence. By using De Niro's voice over the scenes he shows us, Scorsese pulls us deeper into Travis's twisted mind. "One day a real rain will come and wash all the scum off the streets," says Travis at one point. That rain turns out to be a rain of lead from his four pistols in a blood and bullets climax which leaves the viewer breathless, both from the sheer horror of the violence but also from Scorsese's insistence on making it so realistic. Finally, after wiping out the three pimps that live off Iris' earnings, De Niro sits, badly wounded, on a sofa as the police enter. The close shot of his blood drenched finger pressed against his temple in imitation of a gun is chilling beyond description.

A truly brilliant film.

EXORCIST II. Just joking . . . . .

SUSPIRIA. ITALY 1976. Dir: Dario Argento. With: Jessica Harper, Alida Valli, Joan Bennett, Udo Kier.

A very stylish and, in places, terrifying exercise in pure horror. Forget the logic, there isn't any. Just sit back and enjoy the brilliant opening sequence of Jessica Harper arriving at a big ballet school in Germany during a blinder of a thunderstorm. All the stunning visuals are perfectly complimented by Goblin's haunting soundtrack. The script is a bit rough sometimes but Argento's direction saves it, elevating it to the status of excellence. It does exactly what a horror film should. It scares you shitless. And there are maggots in it too. Now that's *real* value for money.

ALIEN. UK/USA 1979. Dir: Ridley Scott. With: Tom Skerritt, Sigourney Weaver, Ian Holm, Harry Dean Stanton, John Hurt, Veronica Cartwright, Yaphet Kotto and a cudding great monster the like of which has never been seen before.

Reams have been written about this masterful suspense/horror movie. There are those who have tried to pick holes in it, those who have tried to find hidden meanings in it. Well, to hell with all of them. What we have here, quite simply, is one of the most terrifying movies ever. Forget the 'chestburster' scene, it's the quieter ones (as with *The Exorcist*) that bring the real terror. As when Ripley (Weaver) says to Ash (Holm) "That signal Mother picked up. It wasn't an S.O.S. It was a warning." Or when Ripley, desperate to destroy the alien creature says to Ash (who has now been exposed as a robot and has been decapitated for his trouble) "How do we kill it?" "You can't," he tells her, calmly. Other memorable scenes include Dallas (Skerritt) crawling along the air vents in search of the monster and a superbly timed scene of Brett (Stanton) trying to find the cat but finding something bigger.

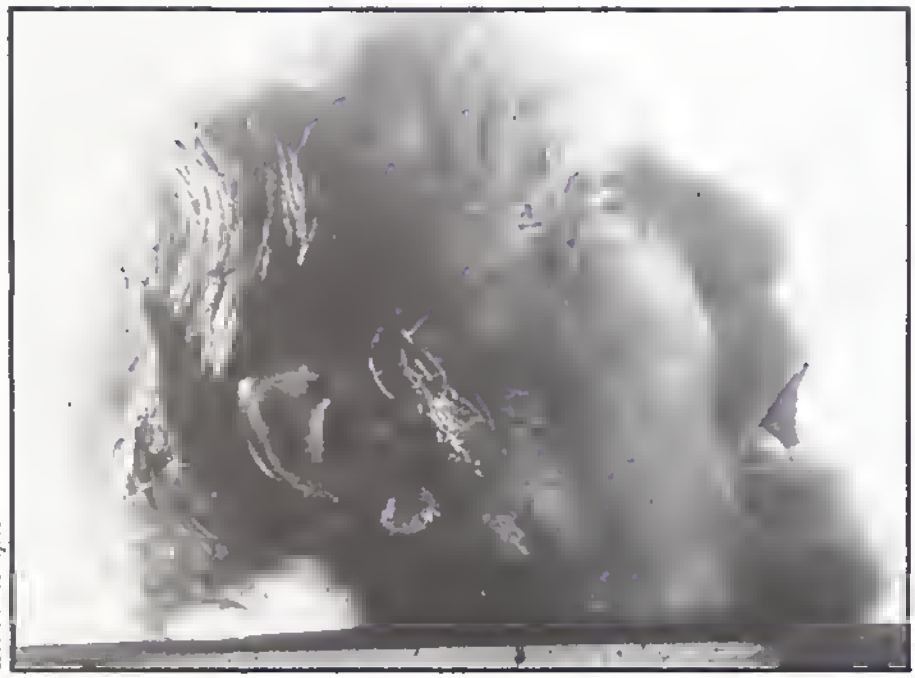
Magnificent. Also vastly superior to the overrated sequel. Argue about that amongst yourselves. . . . .

HALLOWEEN. USA 1978. Dir: John Carpenter. With: Donald Pleasence, Jamie Lee Curtis, Nancy Loomis, P.J. Soles, Charles Cyphers.

Carpenter brings to life the cinema of expectation. The movie that spawned dozens of imitators, not one of them anywhere near as good. Its strength lies in its simplicity and Carpenter's ability to time sequences to perfection. It gets to the stage where you're wanting the killer to slaughter the girls just so you can relax. . . For Christ's sake kill them, you bastard, get it over with. . . Smart arse critics have questioned how a boy incarcerated since he was six could have learned to drive a car (as the maniac killer does when he escapes). Well, who cares? Maybe it was a very liberated asylum. . . Small details like that are swallowed up by the unbearable suspense. Donald Pleasence is great as Sam Loomis (the character played by John Gavin in *Psycho*) and another amusing moment comes when, unbeknownst to them, Jamie Lee Curtis and Nancy Loomis are being followed down the road by the maniac while their car radio blurts out Blue Oyster Cult's 'Don't Fear the Reaper'. Don't fear the reaper, but watch out for the tall sod in the mask with the kitchen knife. . . . .

BLOOD SIMPLE. USA 1985. Dir: Joel Coen. With: John Getz, Frances McDormand, Dan Hedaya, M. Emmett Walsh.

The scene where John Getz tries to bury the mortally wounded Dan Hedaya is, for me, one of the most horrifying in the history of the cinema. This picture is film noir at its best, so intricately plotted and yet also so accomplished. There were times I wished I'd had a scorecard in the cinema with me to work out the twists and turns of the plot. Brilliant performances from all concerned, particularly M. Emmett Walsh as the private eye


Blood Simple

The Omega Man

Halloween

hired by Hedaya to kill his cheating wife and her lover. Visually stunning and also one of the few films to show how really difficult it is to kill a man. (it is difficult, believe me. . . .).

PSYCHO. Need I say more.

THE FOG. USA Dir: John Carpenter. With: Adrienne Barbeau, Jamie Lee Curtis, Janet Leigh, Nancy Loomis, John Houseman, Hal Holbrook.

Technically speaking, this is to my mind still Carpenter's best film. Another classic example of what you don't see beign more frightening than what you do. As with the ghost ship's attack on a fishing boat. A close shot of one characters' wide eyes, then a close shot of a metal spike. Cut. Three guesses where the spike ended up? A beautifully controlled serenity pervades the whole film, giving it the feel of a story told by a superb craftsman at the peak of his powers. Constantly chilling, it builds to a frightening climax without one drop of blood being spilled. Further proof that gallons of gore do not a horror movie make. The ghostly lepers are also visually unforgettable. Lovely soundtrack too.

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET. USA Dir: Wes Craven. With: Heather Langenkamp, Robert Englund, John Saxon, Ronee Blakley.

This film caused me acute embarrassment the first time I saw it inasmuch as I fell off the seat at one of the most startling shock moments. Such is the power of Craven's brilliant film. The second time around I was prepared, so I thought, but, no. Freddie came crashing through the mirror and thump, I was down amongst the spilled popcorn again. Even the short line on the poster was brilliantly effective in its implicity. 'Sleep Kills'. Yes, and so do blokes with carving knives for fingers. Pass the black coffee. Right, that's the ten (or eleven) but there are others, many others which have left their mark on me and I can't go without mentioning the scenes and the other films which have stayed with me and will continue to, for many years.

Edward Woodward's first sight of *The Wicker Man*. . . Jack Nicholson's nose being slit in *Chinatown* (second time I watched it, even *I* had to look away). . . . The final massacre in *Soldier Blue*. . . . The siege of the farmhouse in *Straw Dogs*. . . . John Marley discovering the severed horse's head in his bed in *The Godfather* . . . The rotted head rolling into view in *Jaws*. . . . The giant computer, Colossus declaring 'There is another system' in *The Forbin Project*. . . . Jack Nicholson's lobotomy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. . . . Dustin Hoffman being tortured by having his teeth drilled in *Marathon Man*. . . . The torture of Marilyn Burns in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. . . . The Russian roulette scene in *The Deerhunter*. . . . Dominic Guard's search for the missing girls in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. . . . The computer created child's first words in *Demon Seed*. . . . The first sight of the creature in *Curse of Frankenstein*. . . . *The Tingler*. . . . *Southern Comfort*. . . . *Nosferatu* (1922). . . . *The Warriors*. . . . *The Long Riders*. . . . The helicopter attack on the village in *Apocalypse Now*. . . . Robert De Niro pulverizing a handsome opponent because his wife had said she thought him attractive in *Raging Bull*. . . . Shelley Duvall's discovery of Jack Nicholson's 'manuscript' in *The Shining* ("All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" typed millions of times). . . . The transformation scene in *The Howling* (not as technically accomplished as the one in *An American Werewolf in London* but more frightening because of the circumstances of the change.). . . . A keeper having his arm torn off in the re-make of *Cat People*. . . . *The Thing* bursting forth from a dog. . . . Al Pacino's extremely bloody demise at the end of *Scarface*. . . . The final battle in *The Wild Bunch*. . . . Almost any visual image from *The Company of Wolves*. . . . James Farentino's realisation that he too is a living corpse at the end of *Dead and Buried*. . . . Rutger Hauer describing to C. Thomas Howell how he dismembered a man in *The Hitcher* and Ned Beatty's 'rape' and the subsequent killing of Bill McKinney in *Deliverance*.

I could probably think of more but then this would turn into a novel. Happy Nightmares and remember, tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life . . . . unless you happen to get hit by a truck. Keep screaming.

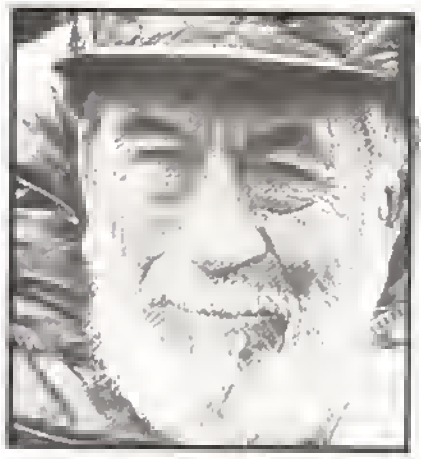
Shaun Hutson is the sort of writer who inspires kindly old grannies in lobby their local library branches to remove his books from the shelves after they've borrowed Slugs *thinking it was a gardener's manual. . . . Shaun spends many soul-searching hours in deep Buddhist meditation devising more ingenious ways to dispose of characters in his novels. . . . Indeed, one idly wonders if death by vibrator or a rectal infusion of man-eating slugs can be featured, but we've come to trust him. His most recent hardcover is* Victims, *while Juan Piquer Simon has completed a lower-than-low budget film of* Slugs, *which Shaun (perhaps very wisely) avoided any artistic involvement with. A decade of serious Metal music and self-effacing to a fault, Shaun is possessed of an evil sense of humour, and bears the privilege of ever having shocked Clive Barker into silence – one mean feat. . . .*

Suspiria

DEAD PEOPLE

By Stephen Jones

Lorne Greene



John Huston

Will Sampson

Dick Shawn

This column is *Shock Xpress'* link with the past, a final opportunity to remember those film-makers who have made a significant contribution to the genre over the years and have now – as Forry Ackerman would put it – been called to Prince Sirki's dark realm. After all, where else will you discover that Rita Hayworth acted with Bela Lugosi or Fred Astaire turned up in *Battlestar Galactica* . . .? My thanks to Kim Newman for help with researching the following . . .

American leading man **KENT TAYLOR** (real name Louis Weiss) died on April 11th after several heart operations. He was 80. His numerous credits include *Double Door* (1934), *Death Takes A Holiday*, *Phantom from 10,000 Leagues*, *The Crawling Hand*, *The Day Mars Invaded Earth*, *Brides of Blood* etc. He finally ended up as a regular for Al Adamson in rubbish like *Satan's Sadists*, *Brain of Blood* and *Blood of Ghastly Horror*.

Comedian **DICK SHAWN** (real name Richard Schulefand) died while performing on stage on April 17th. He was in his late 50s. His occasional film roles included *The Wizard of Baghdad* and *Love At First Bite*.

Argentine-born actor **ALEJANDRO REY** died on May 21 at the age of 57. Besides numerous appearances on such TV series as *Thriller*, *Night Gallery* and *Spiderman*, he appeared in *The Swarm*, *Terrorvision* and the TV movie *Satan's Triangle*.

Six-foot seven-inch tall Indian actor **WILL SAMPSON** died June 3rd after undergoing a heart-lung transplant. He was 53. Best remembered for his role in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, he also turned up in *The White Buffalo*, *Orca Killer Whale*, *Poltergeist II The Other Side* and the controversial TV movie *The Mystic Warrior*.

Dependable Scottish actor **FULTON MACKAY** died on June 6th after a short illness, aged 65. He was the only human to appear on TV's *Fraggle Rock* series.

DANIEL MANDELL, Oscar-winning film editor, died June 8th. He was 92. Among the many films he edited were *Wuthering Heights*, *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *Hans Christian Andersen*.

Oscar and Emmy Award winning actress **GERALDINE PAGE** died of a heart attack on June 14th. She was 62. Her numerous credits include *What Ever Happened to Aunt Alice?*, *The Beguiled* and TV's *Night Gallery*.

America's finest screen dancer, **FRED ASTAIRE**, died of pneumonia on June 22nd. He was aged 88. Best remembered for his string of '30s musicals, often paired with Ginger Rogers, his later screen credits include *On the Beach*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *The Towering Inferno*, and *Ghost Story*. Real name Frederick Austerlitz, Astaire also turned up on TV in the movie *The Man in the Santa Claus Suit* and the *Battlestar Galactica* episode, *The Man With Nine Lives*.

JACKIE GLEASON, who played Minnesota Fats in the unforgettable *The Hustler*, died on June 24th of cancer. He was 71.

TV director **WILLIAM WIARD** died on July 2nd from lung cancer, aged 59. His many credits include *Get Smart*, *The Rockford Files*, *Search Coward*, *Tarzan* and the 1981 TV movie, *This House Possessed*.

Canadian-born director **ALAN GIBSON** died on July 5th after a long illness. He was 49. His film credits include three for Hammer: *Crescendo*, *Dracula A. D. 1972*, and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*.

British character actor **ALFIE BASS** died of a heart attack on July 15th, aged 66. He played a man who returns from the dead in *The Bespoke Overcoat* (1955), a Jewish vampire in *Dance of the Vampires*, and had a small cameo in *Moonraker*.

KIP OHMAN, co-producer of *The Hitcher* and *The Fly*, died from AIDS-related meningitis on July 25th. He was 41.

Veteran animator **KENNETH MUSE** (*Mickey Mouse*, *Tom and Jerry*, *The Flintstones*, *Scooby Doo* etc.) died July 26th, aged 75.

ARTHURT J. BRESSAN, JR., maker of gay hardcore porn movies such as *Coming Out*, *Passing Strangers* and *Forbidden Letters*, died of AIDS on July 29th, aged 44.

MARY SPINELL, Joe's mother and an actress in *The Last Horror show*, *Tempest* and *The Godfather*, died July 30th, aged 83.

Polish-born silent screen actress **POLA NEGRI** (real name Appolonia Chalupek) died on August 1st from pneumonia/brain tumour. She was 91.

The same day saw the death of Hollywood producer and founder of Embassy Pictures, **JOSEPH E. LEVINE** at the age of 81. Embassy was originally set up to explain cheap European spectacles (the early *Hercules* pics) and Levine went on to produce *The Carpetbaggers* and *Magic*.

Veteran Oriental actor **BENSON FONG** also died on August 1st, from a stroke, aged 70. His career ranged from Monogram's *Charlie Chan in the Secret Service* to Disney's *The Love Bug*, and he was a regular on TV's *Kung Fu* series.

JIM HASSINGER, the set decorator on *Planet of the Apes*, *1941* and TV's *Lost in Space* died on August 5th, aged 61.

Gay porno actor **CULVIN CULVER** (aka Casey Donovan) died of pulmonary infection on August 10th, aged 43. His film credits include *The Boys in the Sand*, *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*, *The Back Row*, *Hot Shots* and *Sleaze*.

WINIFRED BRISON MANGER, silent screen actress and widow of Warner Baxter, died on August 20th after a lengthy illness. She was 94. Her credits include the 1924 version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Actor/dancer **TANIS MICHAELS**, who appeared in *Soylent Green* and *All That Jazz*, died of AIDS on August 27th, aged 33.

The same day saw the death of composer and lyricist **CHARLIE SMALLS** from cardiac arrest. Aged 43, his credits include *The Wiz* and he was working on a musical version of H.G. Wells' *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* at the time of his death.

Screenwriter, director and actor **JOHN HUSTON** died on August 28th at the age of 81. One of the true greats of the American cinema, he started his film career by co-scripting *Murders in the Rue Morgue* starring Bela Lugosi. As a director, his credits include *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *Key Largo*, *Beat the Devil*, *Moby Dick*, *Casino Royale*, *The Man Who Would Be King* and the terrible *Phobia*. The son of Walter Huston, his acting abilities never matched those of his father, although he added a touch of class to *The Bible*, *Casino Royale*, *De Sade*, *Myra Breckinridge*, *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*, *Tentacles* and *The Visitor*.

Tough guy actor **LEE MARVIN** died of a heart attack on August 29th, aged 63. He appeared in *Gorilla in Large* in 1954 and won an Oscar for his role in *Cat Ballou*.

Animatronics engineer **T. RODGER SHAW** was killed in a car crash in France on September 4th. He was 39, and his many credits include *Time Bandits*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Greystoke*, *Alien*, *The Company of Wolves*, *Hyperspace*, and *The Princess Bride*.

TV producer **QUINN MARTIN** died from an 'apparent heart attack' on September 5th at the

(DEAD PEOPLE continued)

age of 65. His two most famous series were *The Fugitive* and *The Invaders*.

The same day saw the death of film and television director **RICHARD MARQUAND** in hospital, following a stroke. He was aged 49. After winning two Emmys for his TV work, Marquand made his film debut with *The Legacy* in 1979. He went on to direct *Eye of the Needle*, *Return of the Jedi*, *Until September*, *Jagged Edge* and *Hearts of Fire*.

Battlestar Galactica's commander Adama has gone to that great Ponderosa in the sky: Canadian actor **LORNE GREEN** died from pneumonia on September 11th, aged 72. His film credits include *The Silver Chalice* and *Earthquake*.

Canadian-born Norwegian actor **JOHN QUALEN** (real name John Oleson) died on September 12th from heart failure. He was 87. A veteran character actor, his many movie credits include *The Grapes of Wrath*, *All That Money Can Buy*, *The Jungle Book*, *Casablanca*, *Hans Christian Andersen* and *The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao*.

Art director **SAL GRASSO** (aka Steve Scott) also died the same day from AIDS, aged 50. Besides working on films such as *Frogs* and *The Killing Kind*, he also directed gay/straight hardcore porno flicks like *China and Silk*, *Coming West*, *California Boys*, *Inches* and *Track Meat*.

British director **JIM O'CONNOLLY** died in September, aged 61. His films include *Berserk*, *The Valley of Gwangi* and *Tower of Evil*.

September 13th saw the death of former actor and veteran Hollywood producer/director **MERVYN LEROY** of Alzheimer's Disease, aged 86. His numerous credits include *Little Caesar*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Million Dollar Mermaid* and *The Bad Seed*.

In September the death was announced of American actor **HAYDEN RORKE**, a series regular on TV's *I Dream of Jeannie* as the suspicious Dr. Bellows, he also turned up as a reanimated corpse in William Castle's *The Night Walker*.

Comedian **DAN ROWAN**, who fronted the popular *Laugh In* TV series with Dick Martin (1968–72) died of cancer on September 22nd, aged 65. The one film they made together was a horror spoof, *The Maltese Bippy* (1969).

American choreographer and later director **BOB FOSSE** died of a heart attack on September 24th at the age of 60. His death mirrors that of his character Joe Gideon in *All That Jazz* (1979). Fosse's other credits include *Damn Yankees*, *Cabaret*, and *Lenny*, and he appeared in the fantasy *The Little Prince*.

Veteran Hollywood leading lady **MARY ASTOR** (real name Lucille Langchanke) died on September 25th. She was in her early 80s. Mary Astor began her career in silent films during the early 1920s and went on to appear in *Return of the Terror* (1934), *The Hurricane*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *A Kiss Before Dying* and *Hush . . . Hush, Sweet Charlotte*. She won an Oscar in 1941 for her bitchy performance in *The Great Lie*.

BACK COVER POSTER

BLOOD FREAK. USA 1974. Dir: Steve Hawkes, Brad F. Grinter. Ph: Ron Sill. Mus: Gil Ward. With: Steve Hawkes, Dana Cullivan, Heather Hughes, Bob Currier, Larry Wright, Randy Grinter Jnr, Lee Morris, Sam Taker, Sampson.

What if the cosmic axis suddenly shifted, and *Reefer Madness* and *Plan Nine From Outer Space* were combined into one rancid movie? . . . What if Herschell Gordon Lewis was a raving Bible freak who made anti-drug films? . . . Well, I think you'd come face-to-face with *Blood Freak*, the type of stupid, badly-made, annoying film you *never* forget, no matter how hard you try. It's an amalgram of drug propaganda, religious bullshit, monster rampages, graphic gore, and a cast that looks like they were spawned from a century's worth of backwoods in-breeding.

Just get a load of this plot! Herschell (Steve Hawkes) is a brooding bruiser on a motorbike who helps a pretty young girl with car problems. It turns out that she's a gospel-spouting religious fanatic named Angel (pretty subtle, eh?), and she invites him back to her apartment, which she shares with her sister Anne. But when they arrive, they stumble head-first into one of those notorious drug-crazed hippie parties (actually, offered a joint, Angel overflows with moralistic crap like "don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" Since Herschell isn't into the 'hard stuff', he's immediately attracted to Angel's sappy sentiment, and those two goodnicks reject the rest of the partygoers and sit in a corner talking about religion.

Before you know it, Anne's jealousy of her goody-goody sister gets the best of her, and with Evil Old Lust in her heart, she cajoles Herschell into smoking a joint that's laced with a weird chemical. Within moments he's spinning into Addiction-Land, and just to make matters worse, Hersh goes to work on a poultry ranch, where he plays guinea pig for two rural scientists (they're wearing lab coats, so they *must* be scientists) by eating chemically-modified meat and seeing if there's any weird side effects. So, between the drugs in his food and the drugs in his joint, Herschell is a living wreck, complete with tremors, spastic fits, and the uncontrollable urge to do The Frug on the ground . . .

What does this combination of chemicals do to our log-neck hero? Well, of course, it turns him into a bloodsucking monster with a giant birdhead! That's right, and a pretty pathetic birdhead it is, too! Paper mache, pillow feathers, and ping pong balls for eyes! . . . And when he visits Anne, she's such a total airhead that all she can worry about is the effect it'll have on their relationship ("What would the children think of their father?")

Now, you're probably thinking that this is the point in the film where *Blood Freak* turns into comedy, right? Nope. Unfortunately, it's deadpan seriousness all the way. So, what's a guy to do when he has a monkey on his back, bloodlust in his heart, and a big, laughable turkey mask stuck on his head? In this case, he turns to God (and Angel) for spiritual guidance; but first he has to commit a few drippy gross-out murders, with fowl-minded Herschell hanging his victims upside-down, slitting their throats and lapping up the streams of blood that pour out. He slices up some drug-addled hippies, chops off a pusher's leg with a circular saw, scares the bejesus out of the supporting cast, and makes ridiculous bird noises. But don't worry, because he's saved by a load of rubbish concerning "Faith in God" (plus a pathetically unimaginative twist-ending), and the film ends with Herschell wearing out his kneecaps while praying for his freedom from addiction.

Oh, I mustn't forget about the narrator who pops up throughout the proceedings to comment philosophically on the action and explain the incoherent storyline. Reading directly from the script, he drags continually on his cigarette and comes across like a bleary-eyed, 4th-rate Criswell in a cheap silk shirt . . . Maybe he's supposed to look world-weary, but I say he's been swigging down the cheap whiskey for one too many liquid breakfasts.

OK. Just one question . . . Were these guys serious? Or were they on the same drugs Herschell was smoking? Actor/Co-director Steve Hawkes is miserable on either side of the camera (as far as I can tell, he was only allowed to make one other film – a Sunn-Classic-style family-flick called *Stevie, Samson and Delilah*, starring himself and his son), and he must have graduated magna cum laude from the School of One-Take Film-making.

The acting sucks. The direction sucks. The photography is so grainy and out-of-focus that you wonder if the cinematographer had glaucoma. The script is so inept that nobody would take credit for it. And *Blood Freak* is such a wholeheartedly rotten movie that you feel like spitting at the screen half the time.

Though it's advertised as a horror film, for the first half the tone is more on the level of a late-60's drug-paranoia piece, and it's the only anti-Chemical, Christian Splatter Film I've ever heard of. And hopefully the last! . . . It's an absolutely ridiculous film that's more entertaining to read about than actually sit through. I laughed all the way through it, and hated every moment of it. Yechhh!

Steve Puchalski

(Note: Brad F. Grinter is probably best forgotten for his role in hastening the demise of Veronica Lake by 'directing' her in Flesh Feast, *her last film. Heather Hughes also appeared in the latter travesty, executed with the kind of ineptitude that makes* Blood Freak *the only logical step forward . . . And you'll have to ask Texan turkey outfit Reel Movies why the back cover poster is captioned* Blood Freaks *when the print title and original advert refer to said creature as a singular entity . . .)*

ONLY THE BLOOD OF DRUG ADDICTS
CAN SATISFY THE THIRST
OF THE BLOOD FREAK MONSTER!

IN VIVID EASTMAN
COLOR

STARRING
STEVE HAWKES WITH **DANA CULLIVAN • HEATHER HUGHES**

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